

Canadian Politics and Public Policy

Policy

A photograph of Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a blue tie with a small floral pattern. He is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile. The podium is red and has a microphone in front of him. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some structural elements of a stage or arena.

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Canadian Politics and Public Policy

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

L. Ian MacDonald

lianmacdonald@policymagazine.ca

ASSOCIATE EDITOR AND

DEPUTY PUBLISHER

Lisa Van Dusen

lvandusen@policymagazine.ca

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Thomas S. Axworthy,
Andrew Balfour, Yaroslav Baran,
Derek H. Burney, Catherine Cano,
Margaret Clarke, Celine Cooper,
Rachel Curran, Susan Delacourt,
Graham Fraser, Dan Gagnier,
Martin Goldfarb, Sarah Goldfeder,
Patrick Gossage, Frank Graves,
Shachi Kurl, Brad Lavigne,
Kevin Lynch, Jeremy Kinsman,
Andrew MacDougall, Peter Mansbridge,
Carissima Mathen, Velma McColl,
David McLaughlin, David Mitchell,
Don Newman, Geoff Norquay,
Fen Osler Hampson, Robin V. Sears,
Gil Troy, Lori Turnbull, Jaime Watt,
Anthony Wilson-Smith

WEB DESIGN

Nicolas Landry

policy@nicolaslandry.ca

SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Grace MacDonald

gmacdonald@policymagazine.ca

GRAPHIC DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Monica Thomas

monica@foothillsgraphics.ca

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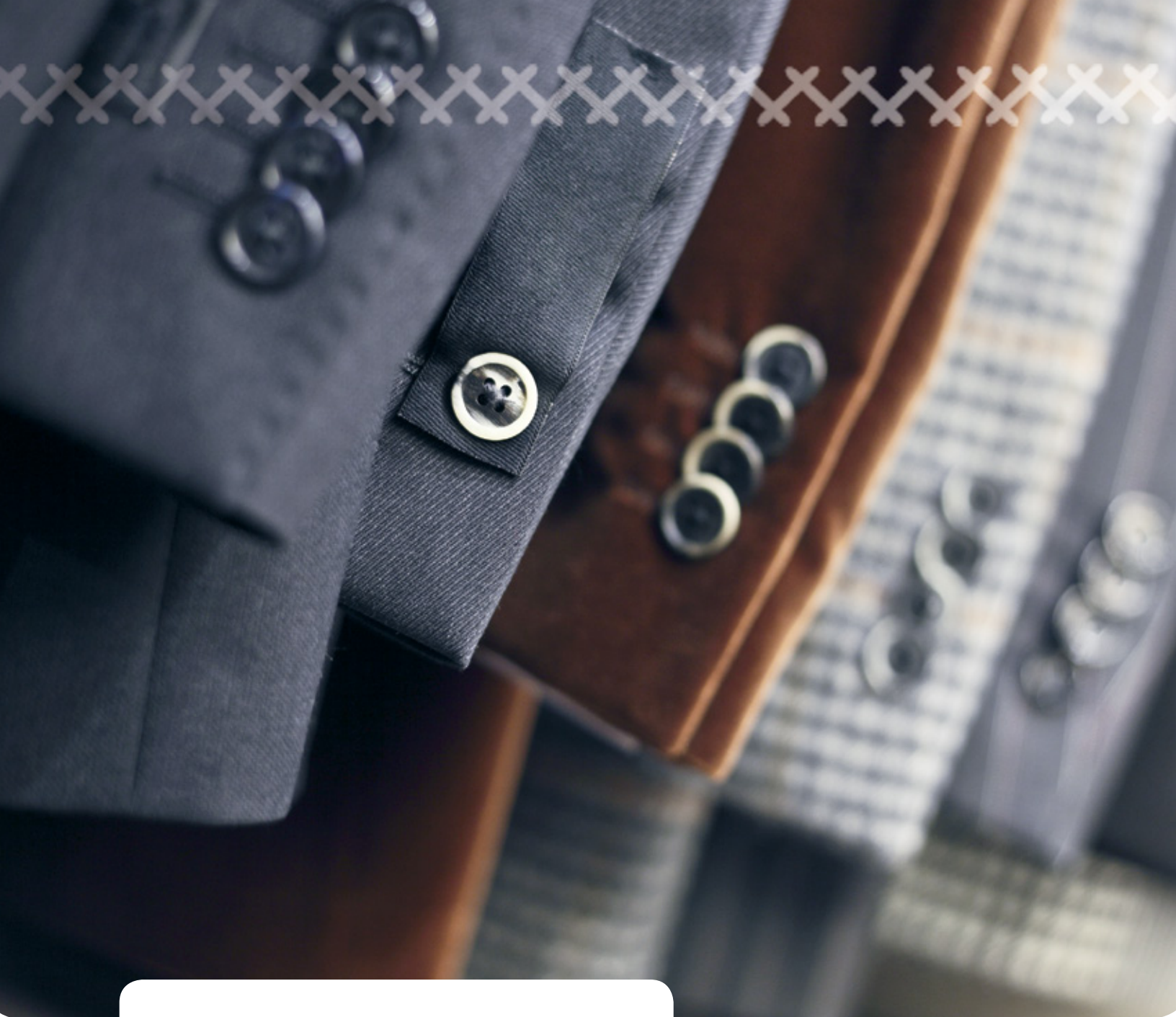
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From the Editor / L. Ian MacDonald

The Reprieve

Welcome to our special issue on the federal election, *The Reprieve*, as we've called it.

For Justin Trudeau, the 2019 federal election results may not have been a relief, but they certainly were a reprieve. He's won a workable minority government, at 157 seats—only 13 short of a majority—and needing only the NDP with their 24 seats to put the Liberals in majority territory. Welcome to the NHL, Jagmeet Singh, who may have lost the house but saved the furniture of the New Democrats in the Commons.

For Trudeau, the reprieve of a viable minority government is obviously much better than losing after only one term in office, and bearing the blame for the defeat after running a lacklustre campaign in which he not only failed to define a ballot question, but was haunted by a spotty record that included the SNC-Lavalin fiasco, and the firing of two women ministers who refused to toe the leader's line.

If it's any consolation for Trudeau, none of the other leaders had much to write home about either, as Robin Sears writes in our lead article, *The Bittersweet Election*. Himself a former national director of the NDP, Sears writes that if the campaign strategists were called in for a group meeting, "no matter how they struggled to defend themselves, the answer would surely be the same: 'You're all fired.'"

Lori Turnbull explains why no party got to a majority of 170 seats, and calls the campaign "an epic fail, except perhaps for the Bloc Québécois." Geoff Norquay looks inside the numbers and agrees it was definitely not a campaign for the ages, with the leaders behaving like "internet trolls", by which "they devalued themselves and the political process."

Looking at the parties, John Dela-

court concurs the Liberals averted defeat, and tells the inside of how they turned "Trudeau's crisis" over blackface to their advantage on policy. From the Conservative perspective, Yaroslav Baran observes that while Andrew Scheer won the popular vote, he needs to overcome the "regional and demographic divides" that keep the Conservatives in opposition.

Brian Topp has filled senior roles in the NDP, most recently as chief of staff to former Premier Rachel Notley in Alberta. While acknowledging the NDP took a serious hit in the election, he sees grounds for hope, not just in a minority House, but in Jagmeet Singh's winning campaign performance and a caucus of, "an impressive, young, gender balanced and diverse set of candidates."

In a Guest Column, outgoing Green Party Leader Elizabeth May also takes a measure of hope from what she calls a "dispiriting" and "a dirty campaign." May has only three seats to show for over 1 million votes. Which makes her case for electoral reform, as well as the climate change fight. Her conclusion: "We fight on."

Looking at Quebec, McGill's Daniel Béland writes that the "biggest success" of the 2019 election was "the return of the Bloc Québécois to centre stage", with leader Yves-François Blanchet taking the Bloc there, notably with strong performances in the French debates.

Author and former Official Languages commissioner Graham Fraser looks at the language issue, always a factor in Francophone ridings, which often determine election outcomes, as it did in this one, giving the Bloc 32 seats and depriving Trudeau of another majority.

In a Guest Column, former federal minister and longtime Quebec Premier Jean Charest thinks minority govern-

ment can be a good thing in a federation. "It is," he writes, "to the benefit of Canadians that there be some form of implicit checks and balances."

Writer and Liberal strategist Tiffany Gooch looks beyond the election and sees an opportunity to hold the new government to account on "improving the lives of Black Canadians."

On the economic file, BMO economists Doug Porter and Robert Kavcic note that markets are accustomed to minority governments in Canada, three in the last 15 years alone. They're predicting "plenty of horse trading before next year's budget."

Former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page, now President of the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy, looks ahead with economics student Mélyne Nzabonimpa at Budget 2020 and thinks the Liberals will move quickly on "affordability". The fiscal question remains, as always: Where's the money coming from?

Our columnist Don Newman also congratulates Blanchet on a strong and smart campaign, and notes he will be an important player in a minority House.

In our *Canada and the World* feature, foreign policy hand Jeremy Kinsman looks at the Brexit drama, now heading to an election on December 12, and what it all means, not only for the U.K., but Britain's partners such as Canada.

Finally, if you're looking for books for the holidays, nothing could be more Canadian than hockey in a small town. Contributing writer Anthony Wilson-Smith looks at Sean Fitz-Gerald's *Before the Lights Go Out*, a compelling look at the competitive and financial challenges facing minor hockey in Canada.

Enjoy. **P**



Justin Trudeau doing what he does best—working the crowd. At the end of a campaign neither major party won, he now leads a minority government.
Adam Scotti photo

The Bittersweet Election

Between the polls directing the narrative, social media setting the agenda and a notable gap between the concerns voters were expressing in real life and what leaders talked about on stages across the country and in debates, the 2019 federal campaign was arguably as close as Canada comes to a dumpster fire. The results, as Robin Sears writes, delivered enough punishment to go around.

Robin V. Sears

Not every election delivers a clear victor, but few are as ugly and deliver as many losers as Canada's did on October 21. It was bittersweet for all parties. Perhaps for the country as well.

Justin Trudeau and Andrew Scheer both lost votes, status and leadership credentials as a result of exceedingly poor campaigns. Jagmeet Singh “saved the furniture” and re-energized his leadership, but still lost a batch of valuable members. About Elizabeth May's campaign, kindness dictates the less said the better.

Even the Bloc have reason to be anxious. Their surge to prominence in

Quebec was a new high-water mark since 2008—from which they will surely sag. Just as they did in the wake of their first surge to fame. The existential question for them, remains, “What is the point?” Is Premier François Legault going to use them to apply pressure on Ottawa? No. Is the Parti Québécois’ competitiveness going to be enhanced by having a large bench of Bloc MPs? Not if history is any guide.

If we were on the national executives of either the Liberal or the Conservative parties, we’d summon the team of campaign strategists for a post-election analysis. No matter how they struggled to defend themselves, the answer would surely be the same: “You’re all fired.”

Each campaign was based on an improbable and bizarre thesis. For the Conservatives, it was that they would make their pitch a referendum on Trudeau, an admittedly divisive figure. Having a bland, pro-life, pro-gun, anti-climate change closeted American—as one angry Ontario Tory insider put it to John Ivison—as their alternative was perhaps not the most adroit campaign strategy.

The Liberals’ strategy was, if anything, more gormless. They pounded on the despised premier of Ontario, and it helped them there, no doubt, but they elected not a single MP between Winnipeg and Vancouver. The Doug Ford ghost stories were less resonant as proof of Andrew Scheer’s scariness in St. John’s, Saskatoon or Salmon Arm, not surprisingly.

They failed utterly to give their leader the material he needed to look less like an actor or to help him shed some of the patrician tone that had made him the most polarizing prime minister in a generation. Liberal insiders said grimly that the campaign as Gerry Butts had envisioned it was to be “all carbon, all the time.” To which there was understandable resistance from those whose memories went back as far as Stéphane Dion.

When Butts fell on his sword over SNC-Lavalin—he joined the campaign on paper but never recovered

“If we were on the national executives of either the Liberal or the Conservative parties, we’d summon the team of campaign strategists for a post-election analysis. No matter how they struggled to defend themselves, the answer would surely be the same: ‘You’re all fired.’”

the influence he wielded in 2015—carbon campaigning went with him, leaving behind a basket of boutique electoral plums that, collectively, added up to not very much. A tax credit to go camping! International pundits fell about laughing, Canadians mostly winced.

Jagmeet Singh was the surprise of the campaign, with reporters covering their previous derision with faux astonishment: “Where has this guy been hiding?” It was a man and a moment. The blackface controversy and his response to it helped. Bill 21 did, too. But it was his gracious response to the revelation that not all Canadians are actually colour blind that helped him erupt as a national political figure. He also solidly anchored the party on the progressive left, giving up the fatal centrism of the Mulcair 2015 disaster.

His youthful joy and playfulness distinguished him from two competitors who sounded like old men woodenly reading their focus-tested lines. Singh and his young team had fun with online jokes and dancing at events, and it worked.

So, now what?

Political insiders have their preferences as to which past minority government serves best as a template. The youngest and most conservative point to the Harper success; older, wiser heads point to Martin, Trudeau père, and Pearson. But let us not be complacent. Given that the Tories still have a full campaign war chest and an embattled leader, their temptation for an early rematch is high. Minorities often collapse out of mishap—Clark 1979,

Martin 2005—so no one should be sanguine about the path forward.

But for the country, the ugly, undemocratic outcome has laid a hostage to political fortune that must now be addressed. Fully two out of three Canadians opposed the choice of Justin Trudeau as prime minister—yet there he was on election night hailing his “mandate.” Some mandate. However, in “vote efficiency” it was a triumph. It took more than ten times as many Green voters to elect an MP as Grits (387,000 vs 37,600). It took three times as many New Democrats, compared to Liberals, to elect a member.

“Well, too bad, that’s the way our system works,” mutter the political old boys. But consider the consequences for Canada. The Conservatives have more than a handful of urban seats in only three of Canada’s metropolises: Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg. For other Conservatives, among the 85 per cent of Canadians who live in cities, this means they should not expect to elect an MP anytime soon... unless they move. For western Liberals, with no seats between Winnipeg and Vancouver, this means that like most rural or small-town Canadians, they will not soon help elect their own member of Parliament.

These distortions of a balanced democratic outcome continue across demography, class and geography. In a federation as perennially fissiparous as ours, this is a dangerous pattern to permit to set over time. We’ve seen this movie. It encourages local troublemakers to seek partisan gain at the expense of Canadian unity—sometimes even using taxpayers’ dollars to stir a secessionist pot. It encourages no premier or prime minister to make concessions

across the federal/provincial divide. It incites too many to make social media threats. There's a lot of nonsense spoken in defence of our electoral system and the competing methods used by mature democracies. The first is that it produces stable majority governments: No, it does not, when you have more than two parties, as in Canada where we have had seven minorities in the past half century.

Another foolishness is that First-Past-the-Post [FPTP] ensures "local empowerment" over "party bosses" choices: No, it does not, unless you are a Liberal voter in English Canada in a non-urban, contested riding—a rather small sample of Canadians. For the rest of us, nominations are increasingly a joke. FPTP means party leaders can choose candidates who are then certain to be elected in more than half of the ridings in Canada. Effective? Yes, if you are a Liberal party boss in Ontario or Quebec or their peer Tory operatives west of Winnipeg. Democratic? Hardly.

The ignorant claims get worse when discussing any system that divides seats more accurately, proportional representation. Preferential balloting, a Trudeau en-

thusiasm apparently, has nothing to do with PR. It is merely a system allowing party bosses to swap second ballot choices among their activists to enhance the size and strength of the largest two parties. We did a version in B.C. for many years, until its obvious openness to partisan corruption meant that it was killed.

Today of the 27 major democracies, there is only one that does not use some form of real proportional representation for some part of their democratic decision-making, other than us. One. The United States of America.

That icon of clean democratic transparency, free of bought candidates or gerrymandered seats, with equal representation for all. Really? Do Canadians want our most important democratic institutions to follow the American electoral system. No, perhaps not. Since 1979, when Ed Broadbent first formally proposed it, Canadian experts on democratic reform have almost all landed on the German model, called Mixed Member Proportional [MMP] voting. Two votes, for two members, for every citizen. One for a local MP on a FPTP basis, the other on a regional PR basis. It's worked very well for more than 60 years in the

only competitor to Canada as a successful federal state. They have had stable governments, a minimum of regional tensions—and a consistently booming economy.

Toronto could remain a Red—with a smattering of Orange—fortress for the foreseeable future, but Greens and Tories would have representation at the regional level, too. Before we stage one more half-hearted referendum of an entirely unfocused query about reform, why not do it the normal way, with legislation? Sunset it after two elections, if folks are squeamish about having Parliament deciding how parliamentarians will be elected. Put the MMP system into law and see if it makes things less dangerously distorted. If not, ditch it or correct it. New Zealand went through several tweaks before settling on their new voting system—the sky did not fall.

This is an ideal moment in our history to sort this out. October 21 was a loud wake-up call about the consequences if we don't. **P**

Contributing Writer Robin V. Sears, a Principal of the Earncliffe Strategy Group, was National Director of the NDP during the Broadbent years.



ELECTION 2019

A Policy Magazine Working Lunch

The Rideau Club | 99 Bank Street 15th Floor | Ottawa
Wednesday, November 27, 2019 | 12 - 2 PM

Policy Editor L. Ian MacDonald in conversation with our writers and contributors.

Graham Fraser: Journalist, bestselling author and former Commissioner of Official Languages.

Elizabeth May: Former Leader of the Green Party of Canada.

Robin V. Sears: Principal, Earncliffe Strategy Group and former National Director of the NDP.

Lori Turnbull: Professor and executive, Dalhousie University and co-winner of the Donner Prize.

Audience Q&A will follow, moderated by Don Newman, columnist for Policy.

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Nobody reached the 170 seats required for a majority in the House of Commons, though all the recognized parties could claim some victory. Otherwise, Lori Turnbull writes, the election would have been an all-round “epic fail”. *Parliament of Canada photo*

Why Nobody Made it to 170

Aside from all the other political developments of 2019, it may be remembered as the year when Canada acceded to the growing global club of ambivalent, no-such-thing-as-a-clean-getaway election results. In the United States, in Britain, in Israel, in Germany and elsewhere, discordant outcomes have produced intractability and division. Dalhousie University's Lori Turnbull explains why, here in Canada, we got anything but a landslide.

Lori Turnbull

If it weren't for a few qualified silver linings, the general election of 2019 might be described as an epic fail for every political party except the Bloc Québécois.

To be fair, all of the parties won something—with the exception of Maxime Bernier and his People's Party of Canada, who failed to claim a single seat. The Liberals “won” the election in the sense that they continue to hold enough seats for a strong minority government. The Conservatives claimed the popular vote—albeit by a hair—and increased the size of their caucus by

23 seats. The New Democratic Party did better than many expected, and the Greens picked up a seat in New Brunswick. The Bloc were the big winners; their seat count went up by 22 and they regained official party status, which allows Bloc MPs to be members of standing committees in the House of Commons. Both the NDP and the Bloc elected enough MPs to be potential kingmakers for the Liberal minority government, which presumably they will do on an issue-by-issue basis as matters of common purpose arise.

But the losses that this election produced were more significant than the victories. Justin Trudeau and the Liberals lost their majority government status and their share of the popular vote was six points lower than it was in 2015. That's a lot of votes. On several occasions during the campaign, it looked like Andrew Scheer and the Conservatives could form a government—an outcome unthinkable not so long ago. The Trudeau brand that catapulted the Liberal Party back into the Prime Minister's Office only four years ago has been tarnished, mostly by allegations of poor judgment on the part of Trudeau. But despite the traction that these allegations have held, Scheer was not able to turn this election into a real win for himself and the Conservatives. Granted, he was never really supposed to. When he was selected as the leader of the Conservative Party—again, by a hair—it was assumed that a Trudeau victory in the 2019 election was inevitable and that the Conservatives would have some time to rebuild before making a real play for government, whether under Scheer's leadership or someone else's. However, the Liberals' first mandate was bumpier than expected and there is a palpable sense that this was Scheer's election to lose, and that he did.

Even though the Liberals came first in seats, it didn't seem like a revival of the Trudeau brand or even the Liberal one, for that matter. It was more that the Conservatives didn't convince enough people that they were

the better option, despite a series of revelations that sowed doubt about Trudeau's authenticity.

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was facing an uphill battle since day one. It took him a year and a half to become a member of his own parliamentary caucus, which gave him less than a year as a parliamentarian before he faced another election. He spent most of his first days as leader handling internal party matters, including accusations of sexual harassment against Saskatchewan MP Erin Weir, which distracted from his messaging about himself and his vision for the party. He lost 18 seats in this election but based on how things looked for the NDP a year ago, it could have been worse. He ran the most upbeat campaign and that might have counted for something among voters who grew tired of the truly uninspiring exchanges among leaders. Elizabeth May and the Greens really ought to have done better, given that climate change was a prominent policy issue (to the extent that policy featured at all). Instead of leveraging recent electoral gains for several of their provincial counterparts, which were generally at the expense of the NDP, the federal Greens seemed to take these outcomes as reasons to rest on their laurels. To be fair though, both of these parties got shortchanged by the first-past-the-post exchange rate.

The fractured state of the party system didn't help matters. With so many to choose from and no bright light among them, there was no compelling gathering point for likeminded voters. Instead of bringing us together, the parties are dividing us up. They all have succumbed to the temptation to micro-target voters whose support they can count on and to abandon the nation-building cause, which requires parties and leaders to extend their growth beyond their base and attract new votes. This is why Trudeau and the Liberals were successful in 2015: they appealed beyond their base. But none of the parties did that in the 2019 election.

All the parties need to do some soul searching lest the status quo be allowed to prevail in four years' time (or sooner). These existential reflections must include questions about leadership for every party except the Bloc. Scheer already has sharks in the water and May has expressed doubt that she'll continue for another four years. Singh might have some runway but needs to solidify the identity of the party, especially since many of its brass—including veteran MP Nathan Cullen—decided not to accompany Singh into this election.

“ They all have succumbed to the temptation to micro-target voters whose support they can count on and to abandon the nation-building cause, which requires parties and leaders to extend their growth beyond their base and attract new votes. ”

Even Trudeau would be wise to think about a succession plan. A big part of his strategy in 2015 was to recruit star candidates with high profiles and impressive track records. This approach might have helped him to win votes and to form government, but it also has the effect of increasing the number of potential leadership contenders in cabinet and caucus. Leadership and brand are virtually synonymous these days. If his brand is not restored and soon, the Liberals might consider looking around the caucus room for a replacement before the country votes again. **P**

Lori Turnbull is the Director of the School of Public Administration at Dalhousie University. She is a co-winner of the Donner Prize.

Not a Campaign for the Ages

While Canadian politics—as evidenced by the shutting out of Maxime Bernier’s neo-populist People’s Party on October 21—have not quite sunk to the levels of toxicity poisoning democracies elsewhere, the 2019 campaign was still deemed the nastiest in memory by both participants and observers. Veteran Conservative strategist Geoff Norquay explores what went wrong.

Geoff Norquay

To say that the recent election campaign was nasty and excessively personal among the political leaders ranks as the understatement of the year.

Charges of hypocrisy masqueraded as substance while real issues went unaddressed. Justin Trudeau used over-the-top scare tactics against provincial phantoms who were not on the federal ballot. Andrew Scheer responded by calling the prime minister a phony, a fraud and liar, but he

created his own problems, too. He self-destructed on hot-button social issues, predictably feeding the Liberal fear-machine, then got caught hiding his American dual-citizenship (“no one asked”) after criticizing others in the past for their foreign links.

As the leaders began to act like internet trolls, making Trump-like smears a daily tactic of their campaigns, they devalued themselves and the political process. It was therefore not surprising that a funny thing happened in the polls about 10 days out from October 21—the Liberals and

Conservatives both started dropping in public support. After trading miniscule leads back and forth at the 34-36 percentage support level for weeks, the two parties moved steadily down in lockstep to the lower range of 31-32 percent as voting day approached. While support for the Liberals and Conservatives bounced back on October 21, this decline in support was a telling reaction to a snarky, vapid and repellent campaign that offended many voters and fed their political cynicism.

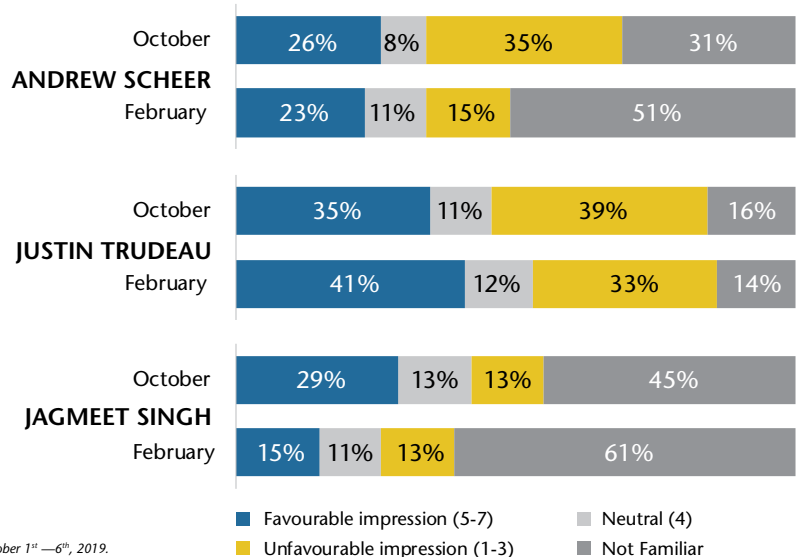
How did this happen?

In a mid-campaign piece for Earncliffe’s *Election Insights*, veteran pollster Allan Gregg wrote that when political parties construct the specifics of their respective ballot questions, they are signaling to voters that “I am like you, and I am for you.” That is why the three main parties responded to widespread concerns about the rising cost of living with a host of

Leadership Favourability

Since February 2019, Canadians have grown more familiar with Scheer and Singh. More now have a negative opinion of Scheer while positive impressions of Singh have risen. Trudeau’s net favourability has worsened, now in negative territory.

Now, please indicate how favourable or unfavourable an opinion you have of each of the following federal party leaders.



Base: ONLINE: OF THOSE WHO HOLD AN IMPRESSION, n=1298. Fieldwork October 1st —6th, 2019.

similar boutique tax cuts and credits pitched to appeal to micro-targeted sub-groups of the population.

In public opinion research, Earnscliffe conducted mid-campaign on voters' reactions to the parties' promises aimed at the cost of living, at least two-thirds of voters could not even vaguely recall a specific promise that the Liberal, Conservative and NDP leaders had made respecting affordability. Furthermore, when interviewers associated party brand with a specific commitment, the attractiveness and credibility of most promises *declined* in voter assessments. In other words, voters actually thought less of a promise when they were reminded it came from a specific party.

These research results suggest that the flurry of affordability promises became little more than "white noise" in the campaign and moved votes only marginally at best. Identifying this "political promise paradox," the Earnscliffe researchers commented: "Party brand tends to detract from the appeal of almost every promise, but without making sure people associate the brand with the promise, the promise does little to influence vote."

Earnscliffe's public opinion research also sought to gauge the importance of leadership in building support for

parties and determining election outcomes. This research (link to tables goes here) found that impressions of leaders are such a powerful driver of vote consideration for most electors that they relegate all other factors to marginal impact. That said, positive opinions of a leader are a "significant but not sufficient" determining factor in influencing how people will vote, because negative impressions can get in the way.

“ The Earnscliffe researchers commented: ‘Party brand tends to detract from the appeal of almost every promise, but without making sure people associate the brand with the promise, the promise does little to influence vote.’ ”

Favourable opinions of Andrew Scheer rose only marginally between February of this year and mid-campaign, while impressions of Justin Trudeau declined, reflecting his SNC-Lavalin challenges. Jagmeet Singh's approval rating jumped in the same

period as he became better known and voters liked what they saw. Interestingly, when the research tested the evolution of favourable impressions of the leaders over the past year, Justin Trudeau was the only leader whose standing among voters had worsened. The fact that Trudeau ultimately won the election, albeit with a minority, speaks volumes about the strength of his personal brand and that of his party.

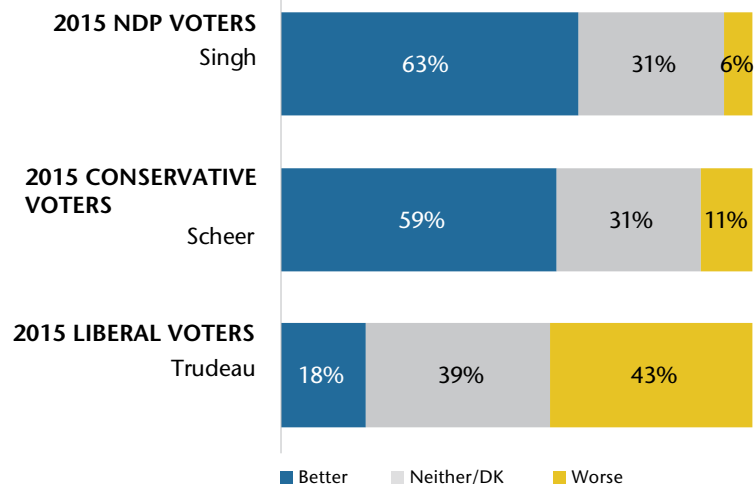
When the parties failed to move beyond affordability and differentiate themselves further through innovative ideas to address issues that ran deeper, they left voters seriously wanting more substance. But such challenges as the evolving nature of work, the future of innovation, and protecting privacy in the internet age while strengthening cybersecurity were largely ignored by all parties.

The Liberals hoped the election would be a referendum on their approach to climate change, but the Conservatives ceded that issue in the campaign. *With the exception of carbon pricing*, the Conservatives had an eminently defensible alternative but they inexplicably refused to engage, leaving the field uncontested to the Liberals and costing them votes

Change in Impression of Leader Among 2015 Party Supporters

The plurality of 2015 Liberal voters say their impression of Trudeau has worsened. Since favourability towards the leader and vote intent are highly correlated, it follows that the Liberals have lost roughly the same proportion of their 2015 voters.

And would you say your overall impression of each of the following leaders has improved significantly, improved somewhat, not changed, worsened somewhat or worsened significantly over the last year or so?



in urban areas and among young progressive voters.

While the three top parties fought to a draw on affordability promises, the NDP at least deserves credit for recapturing its policy traditions in 2019. After standing for balanced budgets and losing 51 of their 95 seats in 2015, this time the party reconnected with its base and presented a set of truly democratic socialist alternatives. The party proposed big spending on half a million new child care spaces and affordable homes, universal dental care and interest-free student loans, all financed by borrowing, increases to corporate taxes and a one per cent “super-wealth” tax on people worth more than \$20 million. While the party lost 15 of its 39 seats, it can at least claim a moral victory in returning to its policy roots.

Another way to look at the numbers coming out of October 21 is to compare the votes for the various parties in 2019 over the 2015 results. The Liberals received 789,000 fewer votes than in 2015, and the Conservatives increased their support by 540,000 votes. The Bloc Québécois vote grew by 556,000 this year over 2015, and NDP support plummeted by 623,000.

“The Liberals received 789,000 fewer votes than in 2015, and the Conservatives increased their support by 540,000 votes. The Bloc Québécois vote grew by 556,000 this year over 2015, and NDP support plummeted by 623,000.”

At 34.4 per cent support, the Conservatives won the popular vote. The Liberals formed government with 33.04 per cent nationally, the lowest proportion for a governing party in Canadian history. Due to the distortions of our first-past-

the-post electoral system and the efficiency of their vote, the Liberals’ 33 percent enabled them to take 46.45 percent of the seats in Parliament—the most skewed election outcome ever seen in Canada.

These are substantial changes in voter preference, and they left several casualties and difficult issues in their wake. The prime minister inherits a country whose stress fractures were highlighted and exacerbated by the election campaign, presenting some real challenges in managing the federation.

Liberal climate change and pipeline policies were strongly repudiated in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where the governing party won no seats. But polls show 70+ per cent of Canadians believe that global warming is a “very big” or “moderately big” problem and 60 per cent support carbon pricing. Therefore, Trudeau will not soon be abandoning carbon pricing or withdrawing Bill-69, the new environmental assessment legislation that Jason Kenney has called the “no more pipelines” bill.

After promising in 2015 to patch things up with the provinces, Trudeau faces the reality that 85.4 percent of Canada’s population is now represented by conservative or right-leaning governments at the provincial level, and the prime minister spent the campaign—day in and day out—personally attacking two prominent Conservative premiers by name. His task of forging consensus around common goals among the provinces and territories will be daunting.

Despite chalking up substantial actual and moral victories, Conservative leader Andrew Scheer emerged from the campaign damaged by the widespread belief in his party that given Trudeau’s track record and personal weaknesses, he should have done much, much better on October 21. Scheer can survive next April’s leadership review in Toronto if he starts with a brutally frank post-mortem on the platform, strategies, debate performance and leadership in the campaign. But he must also convince the party faithful he has learned from his mistakes and knows

how to do better next time *and* present a plan for building the party beyond its current limited base.

The strong showing of the Bloc Québécois, which is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of Quebec’s Coalition Avenir government, promises a more strident nationalist voice for that province in national politics. The renewed Bloc presence in the House represents checkmate on the other four parties who should be screaming “foul” against Quebec’s odious Bill 21, which makes a mockery of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

After being all but written off for dead at the start of the campaign and with his party facing a widely-anticipated annihilation by the Greens, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh redeemed himself with an excellent performance. He was user-friendly, passionate and tough but graceful in responding to Trudeau’s blackface embarrassment. He might have saved more NDP seats had he gotten himself into Parliament sooner, but his leadership and standing in his party are now secure.

By any measure, the Green Party campaign was a disaster. Despite advanced billing, the party came nowhere close to challenging the NDP. The mistakes and gaps in its detailed platform caused it to wilt under media and expert scrutiny. The election of only one additional MP was a crushing blow to Elizabeth May and means, as she has herself indicated, that this was her last rodeo as leader.

In the end, the strategic and policy choices made by the leaders and their parties could not raise this campaign above the tactical level of a schoolyard ruckus. Canadians can only hope that they can bring more judgment, grace and creativity to the table in governing the country. **P**

Contributing Writer Geoff Norquay, a principal of the Earncliffe Strategy Group, is a former social policy adviser to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and communications director to Stephen Harper in opposition.



Justin Trudeau walking to his campaign charter. On board, he went back to the press section and addressed the fallout from the Blackface story, saying “I’m pissed off at myself” for his lapse of judgment, even as a 29-year teacher as he was on that party night. His apology seemed to work, writes John Delacourt. Liberal strategists then changed the message to Trudeau’s “progressive bona fides” and then to the Liberal Party mantra of “diversity is our strength.” It worked. *Adam Scotti photo*

The Day the Poetry Died: HOW THE LIBERALS SNATCHED VICTORY FROM DISASTER

Political scandals are not, apparently, what they used to be. Even as the unfathomable images of Justin Trudeau in blackface surfaced six weeks before election day, professionals were hesitating to predict their impact because such calculations have been hacked by the unlikely trajectories of Donald Trump and Boris Johnson. In the end, Trudeau won a minority government, largely, John Delacourt writes, because the party’s foot soldiers rallied.

John Delacourt

On September 18th, barely a week into the 2019 election campaign, the Liberals’ chances for re-election were dealt what most presumed would be a fatal blow: photographs and a video clip of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in blackface emerged, leaving many, even within the party, feeling that the Trudeau they thought they knew was just a carefully constructed work of fiction. To address the gravity of the situation

for those working within the Liberal party headquarters, Jeremy Broadhurst, the national director for the campaign, summoned them all together and delivered what many described as the moment that reaffirmed their faith in the leadership when it had never been more at risk. He acknowledged the sense of disappointment and betrayal many of the people in that room were feeling and did not attempt to dismiss or minimize what this ultimately meant for the days ahead. And he affirmed that what they were working for was far more than getting the leader elected on October 21st; it was about what they had accomplished over four years and what was left to do. As a moment of leadership in crisis, what Broadhurst had to say was effective. The Liberals dug in that much deeper and ultimately pulled off the unlikely of election victories.

That's one version of this first draft of history. There is another, more complex take on the "blackface moment." Over the first week of the campaign, with the daily cycle of announcements from both parties defining what they hoped to pose as the ballot question, the Conservatives were slowly but effectively gaining ground, despite the polls showing a deadlocked race. Andrew Scheer's message, as he spoke of taming the deficit and giving tax breaks to those who needed it most, was starting to resonate; the number of Canadians who trusted the Conservatives more than the Liberals as economic managers was one data point that gave the Conservatives reason to be hopeful. This was occurring despite the theme of their campaign being not measurably different from Stephen Harper's in 2015. It focused on affordability, the uncertainty and anxiety middle class families were feeling about their personal debt and their prospects for retirement and their children's education. The discovery of Trudeau's history of appearances in blackface should have only added momentum for Scheer. If past campaigns were any guide, it might have even been considered a

“ *The discovery of Trudeau's history of appearances in blackface should have only added momentum for Scheer. If past campaigns were any guide, it might have even been considered a game changer.* ”

game changer. But, as David Coletto of Abacus Research contends, the blackface moment was so disruptive for both campaign narratives that it dramatically changed the conversation among Canadians—to one that, despite the damage that it did to Trudeau's image, actually helped the Liberals.

To the prime minister's credit, such a shift would not have been possible without his acceptance of the gravity of the situation. In his first appearance before the media, on the campaign plane a few hours after *Time* magazine published the first photo, Trudeau's tone suggested he understood the impact these revelations had for those who had seen in him not just a champion but an ally in the struggle to make the phrase "diversity is our strength" more than just a campaign platitude. And in the course of just a few days the focus shifted from the prime minister's progressive bona fides to the party's: specifically, what had been accomplished on the diversity file over the last four years of a Liberal government. If there was any lingering sense of spin or any sudden pivot to the Conservatives' record on diversity in that first appearance, Trudeau's chances for re-election would have been lost.

The moment also caused the Liberal war room to change tack. Just days before the writs were issued by the chief electoral officer, the team's senior leadership intimated that they were more than prepared to "go negative" on Scheer and his slate of candidates. And indeed, over the course of the last few days leading up to the campaign, the Conservatives'

affiliation with anti-abortion activists and Scheer's stance on same sex marriage, from a speech in 2005, appeared on Facebook and out in the Twitterverse, with posts from Liberal "friendlies" and candidates.

Going negative is, unfortunately, effective, yet it can also lock a campaign into a narrative that leaves it vulnerable to any opponent who can embody a hope and change narrative with greater credibility. There is an implicit virtue signalling in the strategy, an assumption of a moral high ground by pointing out the failings of the other party. It was impossible for the Liberals to deploy the tactic in any great measure from that day forward.

They transitioned from Trudeau's crisis to an issue only tangentially related to the affordability narrative to define themselves favourably: the environment. As a wedge issue it was an easy read for most Canadians; the Conservatives floated a vague collection of holding lines on the environment in their platform while the NDP and Bloc flatly rejected moving forward with large-scale energy sector projects. For Conservatives, their platform affirmed they were all in for the commemorative vision of Alberta's boom years. The NDP's and the Bloc's environmental planks of their platform effectively signaled to Western Canadians and blue Liberals who might lean progressive on many issues that they weren't really interested in governing for them. In contrast, Trudeau's team had the data to support their Goldilocks approach. Internal polling from as far back as 2015 had confirmed for them that most Canadians were ahead of governments in their understand-



Trudeau waves from the Liberal campaign bus. Oddly enough, his blackface incident allowed the Liberals to go negative on Andrew Scheer's conservative proclivities on a woman's right to choose and same sex marriage. The Liberals got that message out on Facebook and Twitter. Messy but effective, as Delacourt writes. *Adam Scotti photo*

ing of the seriousness of the climate change crisis and the need for the federal government to do something about it. It may have been hard for the Liberals to trumpet their record as successful, given the challenges they've faced with the provinces in the implementation of a carbon tax, and with the COP21 emissions targets. Still, they could claim they were staying the course, and that they were pragmatists and realists in their approach.

Yet while realism and adroit recovery from crises may be necessary attributes for a governing party, they can hardly create momentum during an election. "Campaign in poetry, govern in prose" might be the well-worn Mario Cuomo dictum from elections past, but what if all you have left is the prosaic? For many Liberal caucus members hoping to be re-elected, it meant you toughed it out on the ground, identifying the vote, bringing out the

faithful to the advance polls, knocking on more doors per day than ever before. As it was for Kathleen Wynne in Ontario in 2014 (and, not coincidentally, many Wynne Liberals were working on this campaign for Trudeau), the focus on the fundamentals—good data and multiple touch points for micro-targeting

“ This reduced and campaign-toughened number of backbenchers on the governing side of the House can credibly state they have earned their place by their own efforts—despite the national campaign team, the war room and the Leader. ”

likely voters—was the ultimate factor in securing their victories.

It creates no small change in caucus dynamics for Trudeau. The PMO could convincingly make the case for micromanaging caucus back in 2015 by telling themselves it was the leader's charisma that got the team elected. Now, this reduced and campaign-toughened number of backbenchers on the governing side of the House can credibly state they have earned their place by their own efforts—despite the national campaign team, the war room and the Leader.

The definition of a Pyrrhic victory is one that is managed at too great a cost for the victors. That's not quite the case for Trudeau, but this election's result does present a considerable challenge for the next campaign that might come all too soon: with sunny ways but a memory, how does he build the trust and the political capital to win a third mandate? **P**

John Delacourt, Vice President and Group Leader for Hill and Knowlton's public affairs practice in Ottawa, is a former director of communications for the Liberal Research Bureau and the author of three books.



Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer and his wife Jill on the campaign trail in the final days of the campaign. She and their five kids provided some the best human moments of his campaign. *Andrew Scheer Flickr photo*

Word to Fellow Conservatives: REVIVE THE 'TORY SYNDROME' AT YOUR PERIL

Veteran Conservative strategist Yaroslav Baran notes some real lessons to be learned from the 2019 campaign, but argues that clamouring for Scheer's head will only backfire on the party he leads.

Yaroslav Baran

Two major questions were left behind after the dust settled on election night: how will Prime Minister Trudeau handle Western alienation and his absolute shut-out from Alberta and Saskatchewan? And what's next for Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer?

Within days of the election, a handful of internal voices emerged, calling the Conservative campaign a failure. Scratch the surface of those conservative operatives, and you see some

obvious motives: most were key actors in the Maxime Bernier leadership campaign, still smarting from defeat, and some bitter for having been shut out of the Scheer circle for failure to concede the leadership gracefully. That said, some of those voices have a platform. And sometimes, when a small number makes noise—and nobody else rebuts—it might just catalyze something, so why not try? But what are the real risks to Scheer's leadership, and what lessons should be learned from the 2019 campaign?

By any normal, objective measure, Andrew Scheer's leadership should be even more secure following October 21st: He was one of only two party leaders to gain seats, he enlarged his caucus by a quarter, he knocked his tremendously charismatic and internationally popular opponent down to a minority, and he actually won the popular vote—he got more votes than Justin Trudeau.

Were the party rank and file disappointed not to have done better? Certainly. The only thing worse than losing is losing after it felt like you might have won. Was Scheer equally disappointed? You bet. But suggesting this dog can't hunt? That's a fanciful conclusion that falls somewhere between ignoring E-Day results, ignoring the lessons of history, and having an ulterior motive.

In 2004, then-Opposition Leader Stephen Harper accomplished a significant electoral feat. He squared off against Paul Martin—also an immensely popular Liberal leader and prime minister, widely heralded by the punditocracy as heading a political juggernaut that would reign for a generation. Harper knocked that juggernaut down to a minority, and two years later, replaced it with a minority government of his own. That same Harper went on from his initial 2004 “loss” to win three elections and govern as prime minister for nine years. Yet, at the time, immediately after the 2004 election, Harper was deluged with questions about his leadership abilities, his saleability be-

“By any normal, objective measure, Andrew Scheer's leadership should be even more secure following October 21st: He was one of only two party leaders to gain seats, he enlarged his caucus by a quarter, he knocked his tremendously charismatic and internationally popular opponent down to a minority, and he actually won the popular vote.”

yond the Conservative base, his ability to actually win an election. The knives were out, with many saying “This dog can't hunt.”

The Scheer detractors will point to exceptional circumstances: how could he have lost after the SNC-Lavalin deferred prosecution agreement scandal? After *#blackface*? While easy to forget 15 years later, similar questions were being asked in 2004 in the wake of the Sponsorship Scandal—the revelation of an elaborate kick-back scheme to the governing party by Liberal-friendly ad firms placing government-sponsored ads extolling the virtues of Canada and federalism following the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum. Perspective, therefore, is important. Scheer effectively did a replay of Harper's move in 2004—except he *also* won the popular vote.

A sophisticated analysis would peel back that popular vote number and see that it also masks some serious regional distortion. More people voted for Scheer than for Trudeau, but if you take the over-efficient Alberta and Saskatchewan out of the equation, Scheer's “rest of Canada” popular vote level drops to the high twenties. He will have to do better. As 338Canada.com's Philippe J. Fournier points out, “Conservatives increased their vote share in 194 of 338 electoral districts (57 per cent) and lost ground compared to 2015 in the remaining 144 districts (43 per cent). However, out of those 144 districts where the Conservatives lost ground, no fewer than 139 are in Quebec and Ontario. The remaining five are located in B.C.'s Lower Mainland.”

In analytical terms: the regional and demographic divides that stereotype the division between Liberals and Conservatives are becoming more pronounced. In *practical* terms: The Conservatives will need to find a way to reverse that shift and appeal to the GTA, Vancouver, and Quebec if they want to form government.

What, then are the lessons for Scheer—to both deprive his detractors of oxygen, and to broaden his appeal for the next election?

Number one, while he has reconciled his personal social conservatism with the broader needs of government and Canadian society, he didn't find a way to articulate that to the public until the very end of the campaign. It's not as though Scheer is the first Catholic aspirant to the PM's job. He eventually found the right words, but too many people found his earlier explanations on abortion and same-sex marriage ambiguous. The risk there is not so much alienating Canadians who have a different view (particularly as there's nothing to challenge in his *we ain't going there* message); the bigger risk is looking uncomfortable in his own skin, and looking uncomfortable discussing certain issues.

The second lesson is broadening the policy discourse. Hindsight is always omniscient. In a parallel alternate dimension, we might very well have been extolling his strategic genius for having laser-focused on affordability—talking about almost nothing else—as the recipe for his 2019 election triumph. It was not necessarily



Scheer increased the Conservative caucus by nearly 25 members, and won the popular vote over Justin Trudeau and the Liberals. The question, after his first campaign, is what he needs to do differently and better to win the second one. *Andrew Scheer Flickr photo*

a bad strategic decision. All parties play to their strengths, and the party's polling showed that cost-of-living anxieties played to the Tories' favour. It just happened to not work. The obvious lesson is that voters in many swaths of the country expect a fully rounded platform—not one that hones in on a single key theme.

In fairness to Scheer, he did have a climate change platform—and even a compelling one. The campaign simply chose not to focus on that. Imagine a campaign where the Conservatives might have run the same affordability platform—complete with tax credits for children's athletics and culture, tax deductibility of parental leave benefits, easier access to home ownership for millennials, and so on—but also a robust climate change message that the leader spoke to at every turn:

“We indeed have a climate emergency. The difference between me and Mr. Trudeau is that he wants to punish you—when you put gas in your car to drive the kids to soccer, when you buy groceries for your family, when you turn the heat on in winter. And that punishing you for those acts will force different choices, and that that will eventually save the plan-

et. That's bunk. I believe in the same approach as Barack Obama: we need to put a hard cap on all large final emitters, sector-by-sector, and curb emissions. And if they go over their caps, we will force a penalty—but a penalty that will go 100 per cent into new and better green technology research and development. That's how you fight emissions. That's how you fight climate change. Not by punishing consumers—by fighting emissions at source, and spurring more R&D for alternatives.”

The reality is that Scheer put tremendous effort into his climate plan. When people heard his plan, they liked it. But the Conservative campaign chose not to highlight it. The leader should have. Similarly, the campaign was virtually silent on Indigenous policy. This also betrays a blind spot of market research-driven campaigning. It may be true that Conservatives don't traditionally win elections on their Indigenous platform, but it is also true Conservatives lose elections when they don't have one.

In short, contemporary voters are sophisticated people interested in a va-

riety of issues. Most are not so passionate about one policy space that it drives their entire voting decision. Most want to see a comprehensive plan—and a leader willing to talk about all aspects of public policy. In the days ahead, Scheer will be conducting a post-campaign analysis. These are among the findings he will be encountering. He would be wise to make his post-mortem activities inclusive—with mechanisms of genuine input for party members, and even visible meetings in different parts of the country to allow members to have their say. If he does this, he will be not only be fine, but empowered with broader insight and advice to do better in 2023.

“Contemporary voters are sophisticated people interested in a variety of issues. Most are not so passionate about one policy space that it drives their entire voting decision. Most want to see a comprehensive plan—and a leader willing to talk about all aspects of public policy.”

For those yearning for a leadership review, a word of caution: every party leader has a *first campaign*. First campaigns are where one makes mistakes, learns, grows, and repositions for a second campaign. It's where a team recognizes what it needs to do differently the next time around. If impatient Tories revive the old “Tory Syndrome” of ousting the leader after an initial kick at the electoral can, they'll guarantee the next election will be someone else's first campaign. **P**

Contributing writer Yaroslav Baran, a principal of Earncliffe Strategy Group, is a former chief of staff to the Government House Leader in the Conservative Harper government. He also ran Conservative Party communications through three national campaigns.

The NDP: One More Rung Up the Ladder

After having the progressive rug pulled out from under it by Justin Trudeau—with an assist from Tom Mulcair—in 2015, the New Democratic Party is in a perfect position to build on Jagmeet Singh's acclaimed campaign performance by leveraging the balance of power in Parliament.

Brian Topp

In 2014, the British Columbia NDP met to review a post-mortem report into its 2013 provincial election campaign. The party had won only 39.71 per cent of the vote in that election, and had only re-elected all of its sitting MLAs, forming the official opposition. This result, the investigators knew, was totally unacceptable and easily avoidable. In summary, the party would have won the election had the campaign not been directed by an idiot. That idiot wasn't invited to attend, but a few of the delegates made sure he got the message by shouting at him in airports for a few months after these deliberations.

That idiot was me, so you'll understand that I watched all of this with mixed feelings. But there was a lot to like about that post-mortem discussion. Specifically, the determination to win. The BC NDP was telling itself that even though it had just brutally and foolishly gated its popular and talented leader, Carole James, and even though its caucus had split and temporarily expelled a third of its members on the eve of a campaign year, it still expected to win government. They didn't think of themselves as the conscience of the legislature. They weren't running to stand up for things or to ensure a message was heard, or to

occupy a far corner of the legislature to agitate powerlessly for the non-negotiable demands of a group of NGOs. They wanted to remove the BC Liberal Party from office in a general election and to replace it, putting the state to work for working people.

That is what all serious political parties owe voters, in every election. There was a happy ending in BC. The party added 0.58 per cent to its vote in the 2017 election (scoring 40.29 per cent), which just goes to show how much better you can do when you work with good people. And then they came into office through a confidence and supply agreement with the BC Green Party that has given the province a smiling, positive, progressive, productive and clean B.C. NDP government under Premier John Horgan that is doing exactly what that party had always hoped to do—put the state to work for working people. The economy is booming and the budget is in excellent shape under Finance Minister Carole James. The toughest issues facing the province are finally being addressed. Health and education and the province's other public services are finally in good hands.

Proving, once again, that insisting on victory is exactly right. With this in mind, what are New Democrats to make of the 2019 federal campaign? A

campaign in which the federal NDP's vote dropped from 19.71 per cent to 15.90 per cent (more than a 20 per cent drop)? In which the federal caucus was once again decimated, dropping from 39 to 24 (a 40 per cent drop, following the 60 per cent drop in 2015 under Mulcair)? In which the party was heartbreakingly wiped out in Atlantic Canada, save for a personal victory by the redoubtable Jack Harris? And heartbreakingly wiped out in Quebec, save for a personal victory by the redoubtable Alexandre Boulerice? And wiped out in the GTA without a single win? And in most of Ontario? And across the prairies, losing seats in Saskatchewan that have voted Farmer/labour-CCF-NDP with few breaks since the 1920s, save for personal victories in Winnipeg and Edmonton by rising stars like Daniel Blaikie and Heather McPherson? And winning only 24.4 per cent of the vote in NDP-governed BC, losing three seats?

Well, we can guess what the 2013 BC postmortem and those cheery delegates in airports would say. But what I'll say is this: it was actually a pretty good result. Federal campaign director Jennifer Howard—an experienced, crafty, warm, thoughtful and smart former finance minister from Manitoba—and her team made about the best of a brutally bad hand, and played some very bad cards just about as well as they could have. Led by some spectacular work by Jagmeet Singh, who just made the federal NDP his party.

In the 2015 election, the NDP threw away the Layton legacy and returned to third party status by promising to continue Stephen Harper's austerity policies. The federal party then had a choice: it could embrace and double down on the author



The NDP took a pounding on election night, but it has a crucial swing vote in a minority House thanks to what Brian Topp calls a “sparkling leader’s tour” by Jagmeet Singh. *NDP photo*

of that austerity promise—Thomas Mulcair—or it could remove him and find a better leader. Instead, the federal NDP decided to do both simultaneously—repudiating and removing Mulcair (the first time in Canadian history a federal party leader has been fired by majority vote at a national convention), and then foolishly allowing him to shout his way into serving out most of the term anyway, as a defeated and then fired parliamentary zombie leader. Forgotten, but not gone. In the result, the federal caucus spent almost a full term comatose, as far as the public could see. Fundraising collapsed; candidate recruitment and local campaigning were suspended... and then this legacy was handed to Jagmeet Singh, finally elected as the new federal NDP leader. As I wrote for *Policy* before the election, most of the negative reviews aimed at Singh during the early months of his leadership were premature. The public hadn’t looked at him yet. They would do that during his first campaign. So, they did. And the people of Canada like Jagmeet Singh a lot. Having taken a look at his cheerful optimism, crackling energy, unembarrassed progressivism, and fascinating combination of Sikh garb and smart-lawyer/

hoser-from-Barrie colloquial Canadian speaking style, Canadians now give Singh the kind of positives they last expressed for Jack Layton.

Singh took his offer to Canadians across the country in a sparkling leader’s tour. A desperately improvised, last-possible-minute full slate could not start to make up for four lost years of local campaigning. But they were an impressive, young, gender-balanced, and diverse set of candidates—like the new NDP caucus that Canadians elected and are sending to Ottawa. Spinners point to Singh’s debate performance and dignified response to the Trudeau blackface revelation as defining moments that saved the party and the campaign. I think he really saved the party a few months before, when he released its platform—a pitch-perfect appeal to the party’s core voters, reassuring them the tribe had not permanently lost its mind and had not been intellectually captured by its opponents. New Democrats were pleased to hear this; pleased to see a return to the tone of the Layton years—and so the underlying strength and resilience of the NDP in Canada—and its limits—was demonstrated at the ballot box.

Political parties are hard to kill, un-

less they kill themselves. Both in BC and at the federal level, the NDP gave that a try—and then did what they had to do to land on their feet, despite their previous best efforts to destroy themselves. And so, the federal NDP went some steps up the ladder before it. The first step up the ladder was to avoid its widely predicted fate, by retaining party status and not being replaced in their spot on the Canadian political spectrum by the Green Party. They kept party status; the Greens remain far from that crucial designation.

The second step up the ladder was to elect a sufficiently large and diverse caucus that it could do good political work in Parliament. This caucus is a good one, full of bright, energetic new MPs in the style of their leader, and with pleasingly few hipster-populist, leftier-than-thou candidates who would have prevented it from functioning. The third step up the ladder was to win a balance-of-power position in a minority Parliament. And unlike Jack Layton and his team in any of his elections, they did. In that sense, this 24-member NDP caucus is much more empowered, potentially powerful, and in a position to advance government in Canada than Layton’s caucuses were.

Really, that’s pretty nice work. But it’s not victory. Victory is winning the election and forming government. Having rather elegantly and artfully dodged bullets and landed on its feet to general astonishment, the disheartening desert of that electoral map lies before the NDP. Singh is, essentially, back to where Layton was in 2004—but with a much better parliamentary hand. So, having played his cards superbly well in this campaign, he now needs to do the same in this minority Parliament. **P**

Brian Topp is a partner at KTG Public Affairs, a fellow at the Public Policy Forum, a director on the board of the Broadbent Institute, and is teaching a course at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at McGill University. He served as chief of staff to Alberta Premier Rachel Notley.



Column / Elizabeth May

'We Fight On'

It is hard to have any perspective, writing this less than a week after election day 2019.

Some things are clear. The campaign itself was dispiriting. As many commentators have noted, it was a dirty campaign. Scheer lied about Trudeau, Liberals demonized Conservatives. The award for the most dishonest, well-funded campaign goes to the NDP for the carpet bombing of Vancouver Island with attack ads against the Green Party and me personally. Even my own riding was targeted. That is how Greens lost 2-3 expected seats. In the event, we were lucky to hang on to two seats on the island.

At the national level, far too much time and newspaper ink was wasted on a barrage of tempests in a series of teapots. Was Scheer a dual-citizen? How often did Trudeau dress up in black-face? And my own personal nightmare—being photoshopped.

It was hard to find the substance. There were not enough leaders' debates. The strange format of the Leaders Debate Commission events deprived leaders of an opening or closing statement. The effect was of a very scattered affair, with too many moderators and too little substance. Only one debate took place in English with the Prime Minister participating, and two in French, but with TVA excluding Greens with the collusion of the other three main parties. A ballot issue did not emerge.

I called this election a referendum on climate. And it may have been. Certainly, we had more references to the climate emergency in the news and in interviews than ever before. The election coincided with the global climate strike, called for September 20-27 to frame the September 23rd United Nations Climate Change Summit. The size of the marches within Canada

was unprecedented. Nearly one million Canadians participated on Friday, September 27th.

But it only left the generalized impression that, like Pride parades, Liberals, NDP and Greens marched and the Conservatives stayed away. For the most part, the national media don't understand the issue well enough to explain, or compare and contrast party platforms. Reporters sort of understand carbon taxes, but, again, for the most part, do not understand that the science has given us hard and non-negotiable constraints that we are not permitted to exceed. The "targets" of all the other parties exceed those constraints. They would not keep global warming under control. Failing to understand the science, the media fail almost completely to explain the urgency, or to frame the political choices. They tell us it's the Conservatives who are offside on climate—the Liberals, NDP and Greens together are the good guys. But in fact, the Conservatives, Liberals and NDP all fail, they just fail at different rates.

It is urgent that we change course and exit the fossil fuel economy as quickly as possible. To do so, we need only to face down a hugely profitable and powerful industry. But to fail to do so, in Canada and globally, means the vastly ugly degradation of human civilization within the lifetimes of our grandchildren, and perhaps an end to the whole human project in a few more generations. With stakes so high, it is deeply disturbing that those facts lay buried in sloppy election rhetoric.

There should have been no room for strategic voting, in that only the Green platform and Mission: Possible gave us a fighting chance of doing our part in avoiding global climate catastrophe. There

was only one vote for climate and it was Green. But the Liberals were able to play their usual card: vote Liberal to avoid the Conservatives.

Choppy waters lie ahead. My bet is that Justin Trudeau will be able to play one of the other parties against another to stay in power for at least a two-year term, choosing a moment of his advantage to go back to the polls. It may not be too late in 2021 to make the massive changes required to preserve a livable world. It will certainly be too late by 2023.

The numbers of seats held by Liberals and Conservatives leave very little bargaining room for the Bloc and the NDP. Just as Stephen Harper was able to do between 2006 and 2011, Liberals are likely to find a party to avoid an election none of them want.

In my letter to all the other party leaders, I proposed areas of shared concern—at least among the Liberals, NDP and Greens. We should be able to make progress on pharmacare, as well as on reconciliation and UNDRIP. If the Liberals are willing to collaborate where collaboration makes a difference, Greens are ready to assist.

I am grateful to the voters for over one million votes for the Greens and for Paul Manly (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) and Jenica Atwin (Fredericton)—both of whom will be superb MPs. We are the largest Green Caucus ever elected at the national level in a country using first-past-the-post. I am also looking forward to working with Jody Wilson-Raybould.

We four have our integrity intact. We will be creative, watchful and ready for any moment when we can make a difference to advance progress. We fight on. **P**

Elizabeth May is the former Leader of the Green Party of Canada.

Quebec's Split Decision: *A Tour d'horizon*

Among other takeaways from the results in Quebec on October 21 is the death of the wave. The province, traditionally, has been the home of viral voting: Mulroney's 1984 vague bleue, Layton's 2011 Orange Wave, Trudeau's bagging of just over half the province's seats in 2015. This time, the Liberals can say they won the most ridings, but by a narrow two-seat margin over the Bloc Québécois. McGill Institute for the Study of Canada Director Daniel Béland breaks down the numbers.

Daniel Béland

By far the most spectacular aspect of the 2019 federal election in Quebec is the return of the Bloc Québécois to centre stage. Considering they won only four seats in 2011 and 10 in 2015, taking 32 seats in the province on October 21 was an excellent showing for the Bloc.

This is particularly the case because, under the short and polarizing leadership of Martine Ouellet (March 2017-June 2018), the party almost fell apart. This became obvious in late February 2018, when seven of its 10 MPs left the party's caucus to sit as independents. In January 2019, another former Parti Québécois cabinet minister, Yves-François Blanchet, became leader of the Bloc by acclamation. In less than a year, he helped put the Bloc back on track, notably by performing very well during the two French-language debates.

Blanchet's performance is only one source of the party's success in 2019. Another factor is the fact that, during the campaign, instead of emphasizing sovereignty, the Bloc aligned itself with Premier François Legault's au-

tonomist form of nationalism, which stresses the need for Ottawa to mind its own business and even let the Quebec government gain more powers in key policy areas. Although Premier Legault refused to endorse any federal party during the campaign, his warning to party leaders, especially Justin Trudeau, not to intervene in the case of the controversial Quebec secularism legislation (Bill 21) helped Blanchet and the Bloc, who could depict themselves as the only true defenders of legislation that remains popular among French-speaking Quebecers.

Yet, it would be a mistake to reduce the return of the Bloc to the debate over Bill 21. In the end, the Bloc also capitalized on the decline of the NDP in Quebec, which lost 13 of its 14 remaining seats there. Most of those seats went to the Bloc. To a certain extent, the protest vote that went to the NDP in 2011 and generated the Orange Wave gradually dissipated and the Bloc has now returned to its traditional role of the main federal opposition voice in Quebec.

The decline of the NDP, which began in 2015, is the other big story of this campaign but, as opposed to the

rise of the Bloc, this is something that most observers expected at the outset of the 2019 campaign. The NDP is not deeply rooted in Quebec and, even under the leadership of Quebec-based leader Thomas Mulcair, the party lost the vast majority of its seats at the 2015 federal elections (16 seats compared to 59 four years earlier). In 2015, Mulcair's principled position on the niqab hurt the NDP in Quebec. This year, Jagmeet Singh took a more pragmatic (opportunistic?) position on Bill 21, saying that, under his watch, the federal government would never intervene in the case. Yet that strategic gesture, and the insistence on the part of Singh that he shared Quebecers' values, did not prevent the freefall facing the NDP in the province. It is not clear whether another leader, including Mulcair, would have been able to stop the party's political hemorrhage in the province.

At the beginning of the campaign, many observers and Liberal insiders believed the anticipated NDP losses in Quebec would primarily benefit the Liberals, who needed to win more seats in the province in order to offset potential losses in Atlantic Canada and Western Canada. In the end, amid the resurgence of the Bloc, the Liberals won only 35 seats, five fewer than in 2015. Yet, in part because of their performance in Montreal and Laval, the Liberals did win more seats and popular votes than the Bloc, which performed much better than in 2011 and 2015 but is not nearly as powerful in the province now than it was in the 1990s and 2000s. For instance, in 1993, at its first federal elections, the Bloc won 49 per cent of the popular votes and 54 seats out of 75 in the province. In 2004,



Bloc supporters rally in downtown Quebec City. Yves-François Blanchet's campaign, notably his performance in the French debates, enabled the Bloc to get back in the game. Flickr photo

the score of the Bloc was nearly identical (54 seats and 49 percent of the votes). The 2019 results of the Bloc, although impressive in light of more recent electoral results (2011 and 2015), pale in comparison. This means that, although the Bloc is back, the Liberals found a way to remain slightly ahead of it, at least this time around.

Like the Liberals, the Conservatives were hopeful to make some gains in Quebec at the beginning of the 2019 campaign but, once again, the rise of the Bloc stood in the way of their ambition. Perhaps more importantly, Andrew Scheer failed to connect with Quebecers and his performance during the French-language debates proved lackluster at best. He also struggled to clarify his position on abortion, a particularly thorny issue in a province where support for abortion rights is widespread. Moreover, his party's weak environmental platform hurt the Conservatives in a province where climate change has become such a key issue, especially among younger people. In the end, the Conservatives won only 10 seats, two fewer than in 2015. Getting barely 16 percent of the votes, slightly less than in 2015, the Conservatives once again struggled in *la belle province*, where their only stronghold remains the Quebec City area, which has a unique, right-wing political culture within the province.

The Green Party also performed better in Quebec in 2019 than in 2015, as far as the level of popular support is concerned (4.5 per cent of the popular vote or about twice as much support as in 2015). Yet, despite the popularity of environmental protection in Quebec, the Greens failed to generate enough support to win seats there because of our first-past-the-post system, which disadvantages the Greens more than any other well-established party.

“The lessons of the 2019 federal elections in Quebec are quite straightforward. First, the Bloc is back but it is not nearly as strong as in the 1990s and 2000s. Second, the Liberals remain strong in Montreal and Laval but they face major challenges outside of the larger urban centres.”

Another party that failed to elect any MPs in Quebec is the People's Party of Canada. Party

leader and founder Maxime Bernier was defeated (by a Conservative) in his Beauce riding, which he had held as a Conservative MP since 2006. Created only in 2018, the People's Party lacked the human and financial resources to run a serious campaign. Moreover, Bernier's lackluster debate performances and the relative lack of media attention towards immigration and asylum seekers during the 2019 campaign did not help this right-wing populist party. More generally, in Canada, populism, on the left or the right, seems to gather more political support at the provincial or regional level than at the federal level, where it is hard to project a coherent “people” that Canadians from different backgrounds and parts of the country can identify with. And outright opposition to “mass immigration” also sounds like a non-starter, ideologically speaking.

Finally, to bring all the pieces of the puzzle together, the lessons of the 2019 federal elections in Quebec are quite straightforward. First, the Bloc is back but it is not nearly as strong as in the 1990s and 2000s. Second, the Liberals remain strong in Montreal and Laval but they face major challenges outside of the larger urban centres. Second, conversely, the Conservatives face major challenges in the Montreal region but also in other parts of the province, the main exception being the Quebec City area. Third, in hindsight, the 2011 Orange Wave was a one-off event related to the personality and popularity of then NDP leader Jack Layton and not the beginning of a new and politically sustainable era for the party in the province. Fourth, small parties like the Greens and the People's Party struggled, in Quebec as elsewhere in the country, in the context of a first-past-the-post system that clearly disadvantages such parties, for better or for worse. **P**

Daniel Béland is the Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada and a James McGill Professor in the Department of Political Science at McGill University.



Brian and Mila Mulroney as he wins the Central Nova byelection taking him to the House as Progressive Conservative leader in 1983. In the leadership campaign his constant refrain was of the Liberal hold on 100 ridings across Canada with a 15 per cent Francophone vote: "You give Pierre Trudeau a head start of a hundred seats and he's going to beat you 10 times out of 10." A year later, Mulroney swept French Canada and won the biggest landslide in Canadian history. *Toronto Public Library Photo*

Minority Rights, Bill 21 and the Election

In all the post-election talk about the country being regionally divided, the good news is that the divisions were largely attributed to economics and ideology, not language. But as former official languages commissioner, prolific author and longtime Globe and Mail Quebec and Montreal Gazette correspondent Graham Fraser writes, minority rights are always a story beneath the numbers.

Graham Fraser

When Brian Mulroney was running for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party in 1983, one of his arguments to potential Tory delegates was that there were over 100 ridings in Canada with more than a 15 per cent French-speaking population. "You give Pierre Trudeau a head start of a hundred seats, and he's going to beat you ten times out of ten," he repeated, night after night. It worked. He not only won the leadership; a year later, he won the largest majority in Canadian history.

Thirty-five years later, the percentages may have changed somewhat, but outside Quebec's 78 seats, there are still some 20 seats across the country where the Francophone vote is a significant factor. Stephen Harper knew that and embraced official bilingualism, which enabled his Conservative Party to win seats like Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in eastern Ontario in 2006 and St. Boniface, in Manitoba, in 2008.

Justin Trudeau's Liberals also understood that. Trudeau's own grasp of language policy was sometimes shaky—when he was criticized for responding in French to a question in English about the absence of mental health services in English in Quebec's Eastern Townships, his first response was to say he answered a question in French in Peterborough in English. Nevertheless, the French-speaking minority communities understood that the Liberal Party was a more comfortable and supportive home for them.

So, in 2015, the Liberals swept Atlantic Canada, including all of the Acadian seats, won back Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Sudbury and St. Boniface, and captured Edmonton Centre, home of the Campus St-Jean, the French-language campus of the University of Alberta. As a result, the Standing Committee on Official Languages of the House of Commons was filled with government members from minority Francophone constituencies: Darrell Samson from Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook, Paul Lefebvre from Sudbury, Dan Vandal from St. Boniface and Randy Boissonnault from Edmonton.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Official Languages Act, and to honour the occasion, the House and Senate committees, the Fédération des Communautés Francophones et Acadienne (FCFA) and the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie all organized roundtables, conferences and consultations on the modernization of the

“Ontario Premier Doug Ford's shelving of plans for a French-language university in Ontario, while there are three English-language universities in Quebec, has not contributed to better understanding of the respective challenges the language minorities face.”

Act. With the government activity occurring in the winter and spring, only months before the election, it was hard to avoid thinking that the exercise was as much about assuring Francophone minorities that the Liberals had not forgotten them as it was about preparing for the introduction of new legislation.

In fact, all of the parties endorsed the modernization of the Act, ensuring that this was not a major point of contention during the campaign. The Liberals were simply more believable on the issue. The Conservatives did their own share of minority messaging. In his appeal to Quebec voters, Andrew Scheer included a promise to create a tribunal that would judge institutions that were in breach of the Official Languages Act—one of the measures called for by the FCFA. And New Democrat François Choquette tried to fill the role that Yvon Godin, the Acadian firebrand and former New Democrat from Acadie-Bathurst, had played in defence of minority language rights.

But to no avail. Choquette fell to a Bloc Québécois candidate, as did the two Quebec Conservatives who had been the most active on the language file, Alupa Clarke and Sylvie Boucher. But two Conservatives who were elected in ridings with a French-language community have both demonstrated knowledge of the issues. Chris d'Entremont, elected in West Nova, is the former minister of Acadian affairs in the Nova Scotia government and James Cumming, who defeated Randy Boissonnault in Edmonton Centre, participated in the

roundtable organized by the FCFA on the modernization of the Official Languages Act.

Bloc leader Yves-François Blanchet had his own message to minority communities after he led his party to 32 seats in Quebec, telling them that the Bloc is an ally. “I am asking, in all friendship with the precious English community of Quebec that is so rich in culture and so close in friendship, to support our wish that the Franco-Canadians and the Acadians enjoy the same rights and privileges that the Anglo-Quebecers have in Quebec,” he said in his declaration the day after the election.

Since the current Quebec government has been handing over English schools to French school boards and discussing the abolition of all school boards, this is somewhat disingenuous. But Ontario Premier Doug Ford's shelving of plans for a French-language university in Ontario, while there are three English-language universities in Quebec, has not contributed to better understanding of the respective challenges the language minorities face. But minority Francophone representatives were appreciative. Marie-Claude Rioux, director-general of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) applauded Blanchet's comments, noting that he had indicated he would defend the interests of Francophones and Acadians as well as the interests of Quebec.

There has been a facile interpretation of the Bloc victory to the effect that it is entirely due to Quebec's Bill 21, the legislation that prevents public employees, including teachers, from

wearing obvious religious symbols, such as crosses, kippas or, more to the point, hijabs. This was certainly a factor; in Montreal and Laval, where immigrants actually live and work peacefully with everyone else, the Liberals virtually swept. Only one New Democrat, deputy leader Alexandre Boulerice, survived.

“The Bloc surge happened in rural and small town Quebec: the heartland of François Legault’s Coalition Avenir Québec. And while Bill 21 is popular, Quebecers feel even more strongly that the rest of the country should not be telling them what to do.”

The Bloc surge happened in rural and small town Quebec: the heartland of François Le-

gault’s Coalition Avenir Québec. And while Bill 21 is popular, Quebecers feel even more strongly that the rest of the country should not be telling them what to do.

And Blanchet ran a masterful campaign. Calm, smooth and articulate—in contrast with his nickname, Goon, acquired when he was a Parti Québécois member of the National Assembly—he adroitly managed to distinguish between his sovereignist convictions and his autonomist mandate. (Had Andrew Scheer handled the abortion and same-sex marriage issues as skillfully, he might be prime minister).

Quebec Premier François Legault has found the same sweet spot that Union Nationale Premier Maurice Duplessis located and used so effectively: a conservative nationalism that stresses Quebec identity and autonomy rather than independence. And Blanchet has slipped into his wake, opposing federal interference in Quebec jurisdiction and Quebec affairs, but acknowledging that independence is not on the agenda for the foreseeable future. Just as

Duplessis sent 50 members of Parliament as part of John Diefenbaker’s sweeping majority in 1958, the 32 Bloc members are both inspired and constrained by the Legault mandate. Their success is part of a return to old-fashioned French-Canadian nationalism, supported by the CAQ, the Bloc and a chorus of columnists in the *Journal de Montréal*.

History doesn’t repeat itself, Mark Twain reputedly said, but it often rhymes. This election was an echo of 1962, when 26 Créditiste MPs from Québec reduced the Diefenbaker government to a minority. In the next election, Justin Trudeau will either regain a majority, as his father did in 1974, or be dismissed, as John Diefenbaker was in 1963. In both cases, support from French-speaking voters proved to be critical. **P**

Graham Fraser, former Commissioner of Official Languages from 2006-16 is a senior fellow at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa and the author of Playing for Keeps: The Making of the Prime Minister 1988.



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Column / Jean Charest

Back to the Future

I know that headline seems like an easy conclusion but how else could we describe the outcome of the federal election campaign?

Before going off into all sorts of directions, we should put the result of this election campaign in a historical context. The first thing to keep in mind is that it is not unusual in Canadian politics that the federal government in power eventually ends up with, as interlocutors, a majority of provincial governments led by parties of a different persuasion.

In fact, it seems to be the rule. Canadian voters, whether by instinct or otherwise, do not like to put all their eggs in the same basket. This is normal, and in many instances, it is to the benefit of Canadians that there be some form of implicit checks and balances.

On regional tension, we are also dealing with the reality of living within one of the most decentralized federations in the world. There will always be some level of friction between both levels of government.

It comes with the reality of living within a country that is geographically vast, founded by First Nations, then the French and the English, with a diverse population that shares common values but sometimes has different interests.

What varies from one period to another is the level of intensity of regional tensions and the ability of the central government to manage these issues.

The fact that we have a minority government, if well managed, can actually be an advantage

in facilitating the governance of the country.

First, Canadians have seen minority governments before and most of the time enjoy the fact that they are constrained in their ability to govern. People like the idea that the government and the opposition parties will be forced to cooperate and work together with a view to obtaining consensus.

Second, the government can greatly benefit from the advantage of lower expectations on its ability to deliver. This means that the government cannot be easily blamed for whatever is going wrong and yet if the government is apt or good at the art of governing, it can take credit for whatever is going right.

Third, this also represents a new and major opportunity for the premiers to step up and fill the void. I know from experience that this is easier said than done. Even with the creation of the Council of the Federation, there is not a lot of history of the premiers being able to reach across their own borders to present a common front on issues of provincial interest and national importance.

An exception to this history was the successful 2004 Health Accord negotiated between the newly created Council of the Federation and the minority government of Prime Minister Paul Martin. For the record, the accord of 2004 received the political support of the Conservative opposition led by none other than Stephen Harper and the NDP.

In the short term, the new minority Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

must do two things. First, it must go to great pains to respond to the outcome of the election by acknowledging to the Canadian electorate that they accept their decision and that they get the message. Canadians will want to know whether they have been heard or whether it's going to continue to be business as usual. On this matter, Trudeau is the lead. In politics, humility is always perceived as a great virtue.

The second thing to do is to define what it means to be a minority government. The government will need to rapidly choose its priorities and inform Canadians on how they intend to work with the opposition parties.

Defining early and in clear terms what his minority government will do, how they will work with the opposition, the premiers and other stakeholders will determine their ultimate fate.

In the end, it's all about defining what it means to be a minority, controlling expectations and then setting the right tone. **P**

Jean Charest was a minister in the Mulroney government and then leader of the Quebec Liberal Party and premier of Quebec from 2003-2012. He is now a partner at McCarthy Tétrault LLP, with an international law practice.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau outside the House of Commons on January 30, 2018, confirming Canada's recognition of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent, an announcement that, Tiffany Gooch says, came three years late. "It is clear," writes Gooch, "that there is still much work to be done to educate members of Parliament from all parties, the media, and the public about the Black Canadian experience and necessary actions moving forward." *Adam Scotti Photo*

Beyond Blackface: Repairing the Legacy of Anti-Black Racism

The story of Justin Trudeau's performance history in blackface shook his campaign and generated headlines globally. For Black Canadians, the question of racial justice is much bigger than a single scandal. Halfway through the United Nations Decade of People of African Descent, Liberal strategist Tiffany Gooch writes, the serious work of the Trudeau government should start today.

Tiffany Gooch

When Ahmed Hussen was first elected as a Liberal member of Parliament in 2015, I sang the Sam Cooke classic *A Change is Gonna Come* at his community celebration in York South-Weston. During his introduction, I said Black Canadians from South-western Ontario to Nova Scotia were celebrating, and in many ways we were. The Black Caucus on Parliament Hill was growing in numbers and strength, and it was an exciting time to see momentum building on

issues that had yet to receive the political prioritization they deserved.

Black parliamentarians, supported by Black staffers and public servants over the last four years, put forward an intentional effort to partner with and amplify the work of grassroots organizations across Canada advocating for recognition, justice, and development within the context of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent. Hussen himself brought forward blind hiring pilot programs and made history as Canada's first Somali refugee serving in the role of minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship—a challenging portfolio in today's global political climate.

What began as an endeavour to ensure Black leaders travelling to Ottawa to attend Black History Month events were able to have meaningful meetings with political influencers became a strategic effort to provide a baseline understanding to all members of Parliament about the realities of anti-Black racism in Canada, the International Decade and opportunities ahead for Canadian participation.

The three-year-late announcement to recognize the UN Decade for People of African Descent was difficult to watch. As it finally happened, the prime minister's speech did not elicit a single member of the media present to ask a question related to the announcement. The disrespect was so glaring I thought there was a glitch in the online feed I was watching. What kind of funding would match this commitment? Why had it taken so long for Canada to sign on to the International Decade? Since we started late, would we consider extending the Canadian recognition of the International Decade past 2024? There was a missed opportunity to hold the government accountable for the promises being made.

It is clear, following the recent federal election, that there is still much work to be done to educate mem-

“The three-year-late announcement to recognize the UN Decade for People of African Descent was difficult to watch. As it finally happened, the prime minister's speech did not elicit a single member of the media present to ask a question related to the announcement. The disrespect was so glaring I thought there was a glitch in the online feed I was watching.”

bers of Parliament from all parties, the media, and the public about the Black Canadian experience and necessary actions moving forward. As deeply disappointing as it was to see photos of the prime minister dressed in blackface, the discourse of this election served as a powerful reminder of the need to ensure our education systems across the country are equipped (and motivated) to teach Black Canadian history.

The frustration was amplified by those who have never before shown concern about the improvement of the lives of Black Canadians suddenly finding themselves outraged by the scandal of the week.

It was the words of Toni Morrison that put the work ahead back in focus: “The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. [...] None of this is necessary. There will always be one more thing.

My family found their way to Canada in search of freedom five generations ago. My great-great grandfather, Jeremiah Harris, fought for the Crown in the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837. My grandfather served our country in World War II, only to return to a community where he and his children would face (and fight) racial discrimination looking for work and celebrating said freedom. Change has been a long time coming. With another five years ahead to

continue to refine and activate Canada's official recognition of the International Decade, there is an opportunity to reflect on progress toward implementation of ministry-by-ministry recommendations made over the last few years and continuation of the plan to move forward.

“Among the next steps must be a formal apology for institutional racism in Canada, accompanied by an action plan outlining reforms to the Canadian justice system.”

There is, of course, no singular solution to dismantling anti-Black racism in Canada. Within the context of the International Decade, I hope to see the federal government continue to engage and consult meaningfully with local Black communities across the country. The roots of this work run deep and activists who have grown it from the ground up should be respectfully joined rather than dictated down to. And while consultation is necessary, it should be understood that from a regional perspective, Canadians are having very different discussions about anti-racism work. While cities like Toronto and Hamilton are carrying out the implantation of local anti-rac-

ism strategies, some municipalities haven't even posed the question.

The African diaspora in Canada is remarkably diverse. While there has been a lot of work carried out in recent years to connect the dots between regional and intergenerational movements, there is still much work to be done. A necessary starting point is the collection of comprehensive disaggregated race-based data across government to provide evidence to inform future policy decisions. There is further need for an intersectional anti-Black racism lens to be applied to existing government policies. Among the next steps must be a formal apology for institutional racism in Canada, accompanied by an action plan outlining reforms to the Canadian justice system.

There are opportunities for the minister of Heritage to truly support Black Canadian historical institutions—including Black churches—nationalize Emancipation celebrations, and think meaningfully about how to support the spaces where Black Canadians meet, celebrate, and educate, beyond the month of February. Provincial governments have a role to play, particularly in reviewing and identifying promising practices developed primarily by Black teachers in Nova Scotia and Ontario to improve outcomes for Black students and ensure the curriculum is truly reflective of Canadian Black history.

And as all levels of government take action on gun violence, allocation of funding should prioritize community well-being initiatives over increased police budgets. We should further ask ourselves thoughtfully how much of the proclaimed domestic and international feminist policy shifts are reaching women of African descent.

Canada has an opportunity to take our global leadership to the next level and ensure our actions match our words. I hope we can find agreement across par-

ties to increase our international aid commitments and identify ways to find alignment between our International Decade strategy and Canada's global impact. I also hope that in this fresh mandate, we will see clearly assigned ownership of anti-Black racism work and International Decade recognition implementation, as well as more Black staff in senior leadership roles. Businesses across sectors, post-secondary education institutions, think-tanks, and not-for-profit networks can each identify ways to strategically support this work as well. Following years of advocacy efforts by groups across the country, it's time to see more urgency behind the implementation of these initiatives.

“ Perhaps, over time, through intentional will and follow-through, the prime minister will earn the endorsements that rolled in from Black leaders across North America in the days leading up to the election. ”

In a statement commemorating the launch of the International Decade, former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Flavia Pansieri said: “The road to a world free from racism, prejudice and stigma is rocky. Combating racial discrimination is a long-term effort. It requires commitment and persistence. People of African descent need encouragement and support. Member states have the moral and legal obligation to provide sustained political and financial backing to make the Decade effective and to continue our path toward equal and just societies.”

When Canada reports back to the UN on our actions made during our

recognition of the International Decade, what will we have to say?

I expect, at least, that the prime minister will not make the same mistake he made in 2015 by omitting Black leaders from his inaugural cabinet while promoting and celebrating its historic diversity. The Black members in his caucus carried out an essential role in both his first mandate and re-election campaign responding to the needs of Black Canadians. Perhaps, over time, through intentional will and follow-through, the prime minister will earn the endorsements that rolled in from Black leaders across North America in the days leading up to the election.

The year 2024 may feel very far away in a minority government situation, but I hope all parties can come to an agreement over what success looks like as Canadian recognition of the UN Decade for People of African Descent continues. **P**

Tiffany Gooch is a Toronto-based Liberal strategist and writer.

Post-Election Economic Landscape: A Minority Report Card

With the 2019 federal election result producing a minority Liberal government that will likely be supported on key confidence questions involving spending priorities by the New Democratic Party, Canada is set to continue the deficit spending of the past four years. Otherwise, as BMO's Doug Porter and Robert Kavcic write in this post-election BMO briefing adapted for Policy, the markets took the outcome in stride.

Douglas Porter and Robert Kavcic

While the Liberal minority outcome on October 21 may have surprised some, financial markets had largely been braced for a minority government since the day the election was called in mid-September, so the broad-brush outcome was expected and market reaction was muted.

Canada has a long history of dealing with minority governments, of various stripes, most recently with three different versions spanning from 2004 to 2011. Typically, markets and the economy are driven by much bigger global forces than domestic political considerations. The main point is that we are likely dealing with somewhat less clarity on policy, and key economic issues are expected to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be plenty of horse-trading ahead of next year's budget. The first real sense we'll get on that front will be the government's throne speech, when it sets out its priorities, and will be treated as a confidence issue.

While, theoretically, any party can support the Liberals, the NDP are the consensus first choice to step up and

deal, partly because many issues in the two platforms overlap nicely. For example, both parties are in line on the carbon tax; both are looking to crack down further on non-resident ownership in real estate; they're each seeking to expand pharmacare; both want to cut cell phone bills; and, neither sees any need to balance the budget.

But, it will likely take more to earn NDP support, with the party outlining priorities during the campaign that included a wealth tax, national dental care program, elimination of subsidies to the oil sector, and waiving interest on student loans. Of course, the ruling party need not accept every demand, but that's a rough initial take on what might be on the table. All told, if that's how the support lines are drawn, the first budget could look a lot like past Liberal budgets, but with spending commitments and deficits scaled up a few more notches even beyond those laid out in the Liberal platform.

Here are a few of the key implications we can draw for the economy, some sectors, and financial markets:

It's highly likely that we will see a further net loosening in fiscal policy—i.e., a wider budget deficit—with a minority government. It's not yet

crystal clear where the major spending changes will come from, but even the Liberals were projecting larger deficits in the coming years compared with this year's budget, and that was before any specific demands from other parties. For example, the Liberal campaign pledges were projected to widen the deficit to \$27.4 billion for FY20/21 (or about 1.2 per cent of GDP), and then narrow only modestly to \$21.0 billion by FY23/24. That compares with an expected deficit this fiscal year of \$19.8 billion (or 0.9 per cent of GDP) and just \$14.0 billion (0.6 per cent of GDP) reported in the FY18/19 public accounts.

Meantime, the Liberal platform doesn't appear to include the cost of a national pharmacare program, a key NDP demand, and one on which the Liberals would likely be willing to cooperate. The cost of such a program could run in excess of \$10 billion per year. Other likely NDP demands, such as dental care, housing investments and student loans could run around \$4 billion, offset partly by closing loopholes or possibly even some form of wealth tax.

The *de facto* fiscal target of this government had been a stable debt/GDP ratio (of just over 30 per cent)—that's not going to hold with deficits of the magnitude we're now likely to face in coming years. While there is nothing magical about the 30 per cent level, a rise in the debt/GDP ratio would weaken Ottawa's fiscal position heading into the next downturn, leaving them less room to maneuver and possibly leading to a loss of Canada's coveted triple-A status down the line.

The Liberal platform included roughly \$2 billion of net tax increases by FY21/22, includ-

	FISCAL YEAR 2019	FISCAL YEAR 2020
Budget deficit	\$19.8 billion	\$27 billion*
Deficit to GDP	0.9%	1.2%
Projected GDP growth	1.5%	1.7%

*From Liberal Election Platform. Source: BMO Financial Group.



ing a 10 per cent luxury tax on vehicles, planes or boats above \$100,000, and closing various loopholes.

The NDP will surely look to increase taxes on higher-income earners or wealthy Canadians. Their proposed 1 per cent wealth tax (a possible sticking point for support) would apply annually to those with net worth greater than \$20 million. Higher corporate tax rates, top marginal rates and capital gains taxes were also featured in their platform, and could be alternatives. There's no certainty that these proposals will be accepted, but a few may receive a long look from Finance to help pay for some of the big-ticket spending plans.

A Liberal/NDP mandate could see a much more active involvement in housing markets in a bid to improve affordability. The NDP proposal to "create" a half million affordable units over a decade (50,000 per year) would boost annual housing starts by about one quarter, so it's a material pledge. But the question is: how can that be accomplished, and would it involve subsidizing builders or buyers? If the latter, the boost to demand could neutralize the restraining effect on prices of new supply.

As a standalone development, a loosening in fiscal policy would temporarily lift GDP for a spell, on roughly a one-for-one basis. So, a rise in the budget deficit to around \$30 billion (or 1.2 per cent of GDP) by 2021

could lift GDP by roughly 0.4 percentage points by that time. However, that could be offset by a dimmed outlook for the energy sector, heightened business caution, or somewhat higher interest rates than would otherwise be the case. We will not fine-tune our growth outlook for Canada until we get more clarity on broad spending and budget plans from the new government. We are currently expecting growth to be 1.5 per cent this year, and pick up slightly to 1.7 per cent in 2020. The small improvement next year is driven by: 1) less drag from oil production cuts in Alberta, 2) a firmer housing market; and, 3) modest fiscal stimulus that was in place even before the election.

A looser fiscal policy and the potential for firmer growth could keep the Bank of Canada on hold for longer. With most major central banks cutting interest rates recently, or preparing to cut further, the BoC is highly unlikely to step in the opposite direction. We look for rates to stay steady for the foreseeable future, with an easier fiscal policy (i.e., larger budget deficit) providing the stimulus instead.

For bond yields, larger budget deficits than previously planned and the related ramp-up in borrowing requirements may put some slight upward pressure on Canadian yields versus others. Still, bond markets are barely

responsive to budget deficits in most cases these days—witness the plunge in U.S. Treasury yields in the past year, even as the U.S. budget deficit forged higher to nearly \$1 trillion (or over 4.5 per cent of GDP).

The Canadian dollar managed to strengthen during the course of the election campaign and in the days after, partly due to the fact that markets had long since assumed a minority government outcome, and partly due to fundamental factors. First, the U.S. dollar has weakened moderately in recent weeks as the tone around the Brexit negotiations and trade with China has improved. Second, mostly firm Canadian domestic data—especially on housing and jobs—have markedly reduced odds of the Bank of Canada trimming interest rates anytime soon.

Looking ahead, we expect global factors to dominate domestic political considerations, which may otherwise be a modest dampener on the currency. On balance, we are slightly constructive on the loonie despite the political backdrop, with oil prices expected to hold in the mid-\$50 range, Canadian interest rates holding at the high end of the range among major economies, and a less negative tone in the U.S./China trade battle.

There's not much to move the needle on equities broadly, as growth concerns, interest rates and oil prices are much bigger factors. And, unlike the cannabis sector in 2015, there's no apparent big winner from this result. On the flip side, both the Liberals and NDP have actively endorsed cutting cell phone bills. What form that takes (i.e., through regulation, subsidies or more competition) is unclear, but is something to watch in the telecom sector. Finally, for the energy sector, it would clearly be a net loser if Trans Mountain faces any further delay, as that project is an anticipated relief valve for Alberta crude supplies and Western Canadian Select prices. **P**

Douglas Porter is chief economist and Robert Kavcic is a senior economist with BMO Financial Group.

Money Matters: Fiscal Performance and Minority Governments

Given the degree to which fiscal commitments reflect the existential priorities of any government, what happens to the process of allocating funds to those priorities in a minority government context? It requires a juggling act of navigating political tension, reconciling political survival vs. Parliamentary viability and embracing collaboration as way of life.

**Kevin Page and
Mélyne Nzabonimpa**

Samuel Butler, the iconoclastic English author, said “*Life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises.*” The premise in many heads in Canada is that minority governments can be unstable and unpredictable, while majority governments imply steadiness and predictability. Minority governments, however, are becoming increasingly common. Since 1867, we have had 14 minority governments, four of which have emerged in the last 15 years. With the 2019 election over and the business of governing about to begin in a minority Parliament, it is worth considering what lessons can be learned from experience—good, bad and ugly—from Canada and across the world, on how best to improve legislative and fiscal performance in this context.

The next parliamentary session will play out in a politically divided and diversified House of Commons. Is this the new normal? If so, is it necessarily bad? The Liberals received the lowest percentage of the national popular vote of a governing party in Canadian history. This is only the second time

in Canada that a governing party will form a government while receiving less than 35 percent of the national popular vote. Not to mention having no representation from two of Canada’s western provinces.

The Conservative Party, the official opposition yet again, ran a campaign with a policy agenda similar to the Liberals, focused on improving affordability for Canadians but with a stronger plank of fiscal prudence (i.e., get back to budget balance). The NDP and Greens launched very ambitious and progressive policy agendas (highlighting health, education, housing, First Nations and climate change), but requiring historic increases in tax revenues. The Bloc Québécois agenda, not surprisingly, focused on promoting the interests of Quebec and called for enrichment to intergovernmental transfers.

The secret sauce of governing in a minority Parliament is confidence. Getting legislation passed, including bills tied to budget implementation, will depend on political support from opposition parties. In Parliament, you can govern as long as you have the confidence of the majority of members of the House of Commons. It is known as the Confidence Conven-

tion. As Conservative opposition leader Stephen Harper warned Prime Minister Paul Martin in 2004, “If you want to be a government in a minority Parliament, you have to work with other people.” In this environment, governing parties need to beware of motions of confidence. By convention, all money bills are issues of confidence. Money matters.

The good news, from a fiscal perspective, all parties made explicit or implicit commitments to fiscal sustainability notwithstanding the small (Liberal and Conservative) vs. big agenda platforms (NDP and Greens). If you like game theory and politics, a minority parliament can be a source of entertainment. Most Canadians don’t get hung up by parliamentary procedure whether in majority or minority parliament. There is risk however, that Canadians grow increasingly disenchanted if their newly elected representatives fail to address fundamental economic, social, security and environmental policy issues.

Considering the evidence, it turns out majority governments do not necessarily outperform minority ones. In Canada, while the data generally point to lower legislative productivity in minority parliaments, the differences are not overwhelming and political scientists often point to contextual factors to explain the differences (e.g., the presence of scandals, high levels of partisanship, etc.).

The high-water mark for legislative performance in Canada (perhaps under majority and minority rule) was Prime Minister Pearson’s two consecutive Liberal minorities in 1963 and 1965. A productive political consensus resulting in historic legislation on

health care and pensions. Modest levels of partisanship and Prime Minister Pearson's strong diplomatic skills were credited as critical factors for success.

Globally, the evidence suggests that practice makes things better. Minor-

ity governments do seem to perform better in systems where minorities are more common, with practices such as interparty cooperation incentivized through experience. If political representatives think minority governments are the exception, they are less incented to work with their political

opponents, even in the short-term. If, on the other hand, as with Pearson's Liberal governments, the governing party is open to cooperation and accommodation, and is willing to move its policy agenda to the "middle", legislative performance improves.

On fiscal matters, the evidence is mixed across the globe. There are studies that confirm a deficit bias in minority governments, while others do not. Like legislative productivity, fiscal performance can come down to specific factors and strategies. A recent study by Niklas Potrafke, *Fiscal Performance of Minority Governments: New Empirical Evidence for OECD countries, 2019*, suggests that deficits and public expenditure can be smaller under minority than majority governments, if minority governments work with potential partners and choose the least costly policy alternatives. By contrast, fragile minority governments are more susceptible to running higher deficits. They are under pressure to bargain with opposition parties to get budget bills passed. The weaker bargaining position makes them susceptible to choosing more expensive policy options and to deficit financing. No matter the issue, the message is clear: collaboration drives better outcomes. Collaboration, however, is a learned skill that must be incentivized and practiced. These messages apply equally to government and opposition parties.

What does all this mean for a possible governing strategy for a Liberal minority government? We have five principal expectations for the new government and Parliament. One, we expect the Liberals will implement their 2019 (costed) electoral platform in Budget 2020. Yes—one entire platform in one budget. Politically, it is very low probability the government will fall in its first budget. History suggests the average duration of minority parliaments is about two years. Moving quickly on implementation of the platform focused on improving affordability allows the government to claim it can be trusted to deliver on its promises. In

TABLE 1: Pseudo Budget 2020 The Entire Liberal 2019 Electoral Platform

\$ billions unless otherwise indicated	PROJECTION				
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
PBO Pre Election Baseline Projections Budgetary Balance*	-20.7	-23.3	-15.4	-12.5	-11.2
Economic and Fiscal Developments since the PBO June Forecast	?	?	?	?	?
Policy Actions					
SPENDING					
More help for families with kids under one	–	-0.8	-1.1	-1.1	-1.2
Making PSE more affordable	–	-0.2	-0.8	-1.0	-1.0
Strengthening public health care	–	-0.8	-1.8	-1.8	-1.8
Increasing OAS by 10% for seniors as of age 75	–	-1.6	-2.3	-2.3	-2.6
CHRT Ruling on First Nations children	-2.5	–	–	–	–
Other actions	–	-3.1	-4.9	-4.9	-4.8
REVENUE					
Helping Canadians keep more of what they earn	–	-2.9	-3.9	-4.9	-5.7
New tax expenditure and government spending review	–	2.0	2.5	2.5	3.0
Cracking down on corporate tax loopholes	–	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4
Making multinational tech giants pay their fair share	–	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7
Speculation tax on vacant residential property	–	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
10% luxury tax	–	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Self-Financing EI Measures	–	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.6
Trans Mountain expansion project	–	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.5
Total Policy Actions	-2.5	-4.1	-8.3	-9.3	-9.8
Public debt charges		-0.1	-0.4	-0.8	-1.1
Budgetary balance	-23.2	-27.5	-24.2	-22.6	-22.2
Adjustment for risk		-3.0	-3.0	-3.0	-3.0
Final budgetary balance (with risk adjustment)	-23.2	-30.5	-27.2	-25.6	-25.2
Federal debt (per cent of GDP)	31.0%	31.2%	31.1%	31.0%	30.9%

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

*A negative number implies a deterioration in the budgetary balance (lower revenues or higher spending). A positive number implies an improvement in the budgetary balance (higher revenues or lower spending).

Sources: Electoral Liberal Platform, Finance Canada and Parliamentary Budget Officer

addition, the Conservative Party ran on a platform targeting similar issues.

Two, a key transition discussion is taking place now behind the scenes between the incoming government and public service. It is imperative that the legislative agenda and fiscal strategy are woven together. We need policy development and potential implementation strategies on a range of issues. Policy choices and trade-offs need to be made in the context of a credible fiscal strategy that is realistic, prudent, transparent and responsible.

Third, on policy issues, the new Liberal government should give due consideration to launching expert panels to bring evidence, ideas, recommendations and transparency to (multi-partisan) parliamentary committees as early as the fall of 2020. All major policy issues highlighted across political parties in the 2019 electoral campaign should be considered—including climate change, pharmacare and dental care, review of the Canada Health Act, education, housing, public infrastructure, First Nations affairs and tax reform. All parties should contribute to the development of the terms of reference for the policy reviews. The reviews should be conducted in a way that promotes progress and collaboration.

Fourth, on electoral reform, the new Liberal government should consider launching a citizen assembly as highlighted by grassroots organizations like Fair Vote Canada. Electoral reform was a major policy failure of the previous Liberal government. The time has come for citizens and experts to tell our elected representatives what kind of electoral system we want for Canada. Electoral reform has strong support from people who voted for the NDP and Green Party. As U.S. President Woodrow Wilson once famously said, “if you think too much about being re-elected, it is very difficult to be worth re-electing.”

Finally, on improving fiscal performance, the new Liberal government should consider the development of a fiscal charter, in collaboration with opposition parties, to outline principles of fiscal management in good times and less good times, as well as budget constraint targets and rules that will work in a minority parliamentary context. The concept of a fiscal charter has recent roots in other Westminster parliamentary systems such as the United Kingdom and Australia.

The current Liberal fiscal rule of a declining debt-to-GDP ratio, while supported by the NDP and Green Party in the 2019 electoral campaign, is likely

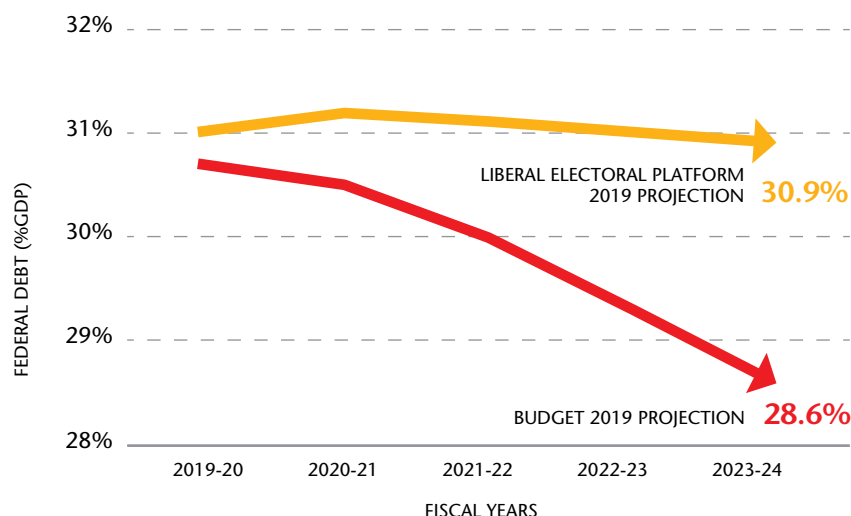
too weak of a rule to guide budgets in a minority setting where political pressures to use deficit financing will be greater. (See Chart 1). Note the upward drift to the projected debt-to-GDP ratio since Budget 2019. A more complete fiscal strategy could include fiscal targets based on (nominal) budget balances; rules that limit (deficit) spending; contingency reserves to address risk; and annual fiscal sustainability analysis.

Building on fiscal reform, there is an opportunity to strengthen expenditure management systems and Parliamentary fiscal oversight. Both the Liberals and Conservatives called for spending reviews in the 2019 electoral campaign. All parties, including the Bloc, called for revenue integrity measures to promote tax compliance, reduce tax gaps and generate much needed tax revenues. Recommendations for system-wide reforms like the 2012 Operations and Estimates Committee Report on Estimates Reform under NDP Chair Pat Martin have largely fallen by the wayside under majority governments less interested in strengthening parliamentary accountability. In a minority Parliament, prospects could be much brighter for strengthening fiscal performance by better aligning financial and non-financial (performance) information and improving transparency. Both are needed to strengthen fiscal discipline.

There is a need to change the way we govern, if minority parliaments are going to get things done. The key words to live by are compromise; long-term policy focus; and citizen engagement. There are sufficient premises and lessons from Canada demonstrating that minority parliaments can be effective. Our elected officials have the opportunity to show us how it's done. **P**

Kevin Page, former Parliamentary Budget Officer, is President of the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy at University of Ottawa. Mélyne Nzabonimpa is an undergraduate economics student at University of Ottawa.

CHART 1: The Problem with a Fiscal Constraint Rule Based on a Declining Debt-to-GDP Ratio





Column / Don Newman

Monsieur Blanchet's *Tour de Force*

Take a bow, Yves-François Blanchet. In the federal election on October 21st, you changed the political landscape in Canada by changing the political landscape in Quebec.

Almost singlehandedly, you have revived the Bloc Québécois, taking it from 10 seats to 32 and making it the third largest party in the House of Commons. You blocked the Trudeau Liberals' hopes of gaining more seats in Quebec to make up for seats they knew they would lose in other parts of Canada. Today, Justin Trudeau is still in power, but he is now in charge of a minority government that cannot alone control the House of Commons, and instead has to search for at least one party to partner with on votes to get anything done.

While some Quebec groups are challenging the province's secular clothing law—which was played as a litmus test during the campaign—in the courts, most francophones support the legislation and see it as a legitimate way of maintaining their culture. For NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, a turban-wearing Sikh, the law should be a particular personal affront, although for political reasons and the hope of support in Quebec, he and all the party leaders soft-pedalled their opposition during the campaign.

But there can be no soft-peddalling the political impact of the Blanchet resurgence of the Bloc of recent history. In the election of 2011, it was the sudden emergence of Jack Layton and the NDP in Quebec that overnight lead to the virtual oblivion of

the Bloc. In that election, support for the Bloc collapsed and it all went to the NDP. That year, the party won 59 seats in the province, propelling it to Official Opposition status in the House of Commons.

By 2015, things were partially returning to normal. The Trudeau-led liberals won 40 seats in Quebec and the NDP were down to 15. Then came this election. In addition to the 32 Bloc seats, the Liberals won 34 and the Conservatives, 10. And the NDP? Just two elections after the “Orange Wave” and the 59-seat breakthrough, the NDP managed to save only one seat in the province.

So, you might think the NDP and its leader would be livid at the Bloc and Blanchet. Not really, although the party is almost wiped out in Quebec, the NDP finished this election with 20 seats fewer than in 2015 and surrendered third place in the Commons to the resurgent Bloc. But occasionally you can win by losing, and for the NDP this is one of those times. Because of the results in Quebec, the Liberals are now in a minority and the NDP's remaining 24 seats are just what they need to get legislation through the Commons and to control Parliamentary committees.

That means that even in their diminished circumstances, the NDP will have more clout in the House of Commons than at any time since 1973 and 1974. That is the last time a Liberal prime minister named Trudeau found himself in a minority situation and had to turn to the NDP for support. Now, history is repeating itself. Singh isn't exactly steering

the car, but he is in the front seat. And he has brought his map.

The return of the Bloc Québécois has some people worried about the resurgence of separatism in Quebec. Those worries are overstated. For the most part, Quebecers realize they have the best of both worlds; a Canadian passport, access to the world as Canadians, and something close to sovereignty association at home. Besides, with the examples of Brexit and Catalonia in Spain, they have evidence of just how difficult leaving can be—particularly when any potential gains are marginal or non-existent.

But the re-emergence of the Bloc Québécois does mean that, if its apparent popularity endures, it will be harder for other pan-Canadian parties to form majority governments. The implications for that are far-reaching and as yet uncertain, although for the NDP perhaps less unsettling than some others.

We will have to wait to see how that scenario will work out. But in the meantime, take a bow, Mr. Blanchet. **P**

Policy columnist Don Newman is Senior Counsel at Navigator and Ensign Canada and a lifetime member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery.



Britain's existential Brexit crisis hit the streets in October, with an election now on the political calendar for December 12. For the U.K., it could be a defining moment of nationhood in peacetime. *Wikipedia photo*

Brexit: A Rationale, Not a Defence

As the United Kingdom braces for an election that will presumably be a de facto referendum on Brexit, former Canadian ambassador to the U.K. Jeremy Kinsman writes that, whatever odds London's famous bookmakers are offering, hold your money on the outcome.

Jeremy Kinsman

A synonym for political chaos and confusion. To ardent advocates in a divided and embittered Britain, it represents a noble and historic national cause. Opponents fear it will reduce the United Kingdom's stature, prosperity, and even size, tempting Scotland and Northern Ireland to defect from what they see as English nativism. Polls indicate most in Britain regret the way the 2016 referendum amounted to a careless leap in the dark, a simplistic binary choice then

Prime Minister David Cameron presumably didn't think he would lose and hardly tried to win.

After three years and four months of confusion, conflict, delay and multiple failures to agree on how to exit the European Union, Parliament has decided on a general election December 12 that citizens hope can end the nightmare of stress, division and uncertainty.

Having earlier lost his working majority in the House of Commons and been repeatedly rebuffed by Parliament and the High Court, Prime Minister Boris Johnson sought Parliament's tentative backing in principle for a new exit deal. But the principle was conditional on acceptance of opposition amendments seeking a non-member relationship to the EU closer than hardline Brexiteers who've hijacked the Conservative Party could bear. EU ex-partners, over their Brexit remorse and keen to re-focus on reforming the bloc to meet the expectations of its 450 million remaining citizens, agreed to a final extension of Article 50, the divorce mechanism of the Treaty on European Union, until January 31.

So, Johnson, who has opened up a surprising lead in the polls, wants the election to win an outright parliamentary majority, enabling him to "Get Brexit Done" his way. But the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act of 2011 stipulates a two-thirds majority to call a snap election. Distrusted in Parliament as a flip-flopping exhibitionist, Johnson's blithe self-confidence merits discounting. He has overplayed every hand he has held since party faithful chose him for PM based on his apparent winnability.

But he won support to proceed December 12 from the third-party Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Nationalists both of which support "remain" and see themselves trending as refuges for voters repelled by both Opposition Leader Jeremy Corbyn's truculent "old Labour" socialism and by the Conservatives' right-wing nationalism. Having withheld

“The tortured saga at least provides a valuable cautionary tale to others in the EU itself where populist nationalism has also been fueled by identity issues.”

agreement until a no-deal Brexit bill was off the table, Corbyn then joined in. Under-35s, looking to their future, overwhelmingly support "remain" parties. Over-55s, perhaps out of nostalgia, overwhelmingly support the Tories and "leave." Hold your bets on the outcome.

Is the Brexit saga part of a global populist trend? Or is it a political phenomenon specific to grievances felt in the British Isles? Brexit supporters do share some grievances felt by anti-establishment voters elsewhere, over immigration, and feeling left behind economically, especially in comparison to London elites.

But the primary driver is specifically British, or more accurately, English, individualism, enveloped in an overarching cloak of "identity"—the gut feeling the English just aren't European by history or social inclination.

The historic postwar European political project to end the continent's murderous wars never resonated the same way in Britain, where culture provides a constant bath of nostalgic and often mythic dramatizations of the distinct British winner's role in WW II. This may explain Cameron's reticence in the referendum campaign to praise the historic merits of the EU project. By ignoring its epochal and existential achievement of pooling sovereignty for the common good, he gave Brexit opponents a free run to depict it as a threat. They called for reclaiming "control"—of "our own borders, currency, and laws."

The reality is that Britain had kept control, having opted out of communitarian and ambitious EU proj-

ects such as the Schengen common travel space, the euro and the European social contract. U.K. motivation for joining the European Community in the 1960s was almost exclusively mercantilist. Once in, the U.K. generally resisted further deepening of substantive EU cooperation beyond commerce, while promoting accelerated widening of EU membership, thereby diluting the union, and the weight in it of Germany and France. Yet, over time, British officials became a vital force inside the EU system. The EU sailed more strongly internationally because of U.K. membership, as did the U.K. because of the leverage the EU provided.

But Tony Blair, originally an EU advocate, chose to line the U.K. up with the U.S. by fronting the phony U.S. case for the catastrophic 2003 joint invasion of Iraq. He thereby aggressively opened an EU split between "old" Europe which mostly deplored this U.S./U.K. war of choice, and "new" Europe, ex-Soviet bloc entrants more inclined to look to the U.S. for security. After Blair's reputation in Britain plummeted, Labour entrusted new leadership to the most "un-Blair" "old Labour" hands available—even- tually Jeremy Corbyn's—accelerating polarization of U.K. politics and the evisceration of the centre, the place where compromise thrives.

Despite Britain's robust separation of powers, Johnson attempted to push through a harsh Brexit. He was stymied by parliament and the High Court. His hints at a populist Brexit election campaign for the people and against London's elitist institutions seem inspired by the populist authoritarian playbook. Hope persists that an election, and if necessary (if John-



Boris Johnson, Britain's third PM in as many years, takes his idea of country to the voters on December 12, having been defeated in the House on his Brexit timeline. *Andrew Parsons Flickr photo*

son fails to win a majority), a second referendum will restore the body politic's ability to compromise, which the Brexit crisis eroded.

Whatever happens, relationships inside the country, and with ex-European partners (with which a more difficult negotiation on a new relationship lies ahead), will likely suffer. But the tortured saga at least provides a valuable cautionary tale to others in the EU itself where populist nationalism has also been fueled by identity issues.

In the transitional post-Cold War 90s, former members of the Soviet bloc sought to fill the void left by communist evacuation by nationalist recourse to ethnic solidarity, old values and cultural traditions. At first, Western capitals and the early, humanistic post-communist leaders rationalized the look to the past as a nation-rebuilding phase that would pass. But opportunistic populist politicians exploited the emotive nationalist wave, gaining power via divisive majoritarian and often ethnic and sectarian messaging to "the people." Under a banner of "democratic illiberalism," Hungary's Viktor Orban stoked opposition to immigrants, denouncing oversight by a secular and remote EU hierarchy he maintained kept the country down.

Beyond the EU, populist strongmen like Erdogan, Duterte, Bolsonaro, and, of course, Putin, ditched ideology in favour of personal power, hobbling the checks and balances repre-

sentative democracies vitally erect to prevent excessive executive control—a robust parliament, independent courts, and a vigilant press.

“The U.S. is undergoing a similar collision between an expansive, impulsive, populist and nationalist executive and Congress, in a divided society, amplified by a distorted social media environment that fosters disrespect for traditional centres of expertise, authority, and even scientific evidence. A decisive political battle is underway”

Obviously, the U.S. is undergoing a similar collision between an expansive, impulsive, populist and nationalist executive and Congress, in a divided society, amplified by a distorted social media environment that fosters disrespect for traditional centres of expertise, authority, and even scientific evidence. A decisive political battle is underway.

It's fashionable in the populist political world, for protagonists like Trump, Steve Bannon,

Dominic Cummings, or Matteo Salvini, to vaunt political competition as a form of war between antagonistic sides. It has been a recurring and destructive theme since populist plebs faced off against elitist tribunes in the earliest days of the Roman Republic. Canadians believed our political culture was immune to nativist populism. The surge of identity politics via the Bloc Québécois probably does have more to do with Canadian regional specificity.

Our courts retain authority and credibility. Inclusivity still reigns as Canada's over-arching civic theme, and anti-immigrant messages got little traction in our election. Federalism provides a check and balance against over-powered majority regimes in Ottawa. But if untreated, reanimated Western alienation could prove toxic, especially if provincial leaders are tempted to run against Ottawa in the style of European national leaders who habitually ran at home against Brussels, undermining public support for the EU itself. The election's minority government outcome is an opportunity to strengthen our democratic institutions and processes, especially after a derisive and negative campaign.

One Canadian check and imbalance cries out for repair. The Liberal majority government elected in 2015 marginalized Parliament, over-empowering a ham-handed Prime Minister's Office, including at the expense of ministerial authority. We need a co-operative parliamentary culture, especially to contribute usefully to a consortium of like-minded democracies (hopefully including Britain) to defend liberal internationalism against populist nationalism. It can't be done just by signaling our virtuous democratic credentials. As for the U.K., Canada needs to show outsiders and ourselves that our democracy works. **P**

Policy Magazine contributing writer Jeremy Kinsman is a former Canadian ambassador to Russia, the U.K. and the EU. He is affiliated with University of California, Berkeley, and is a distinguished fellow of the Canadian International Council.

Book Review



Twilight of a National Game

Sean Fitz-Gerald

Before the Lights Go Out: Inside a Game on the Brink. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2019

Review by
Anthony Wilson-Smith

Few Canadian symbols pack more power than hockey. Its influence is everywhere, ranging from classic fiction (Roch Carrier's *The Hockey Sweater*) to art (Ken Danby's *At the Crease*) to music (the Tragically Hip's '50 Mission Cap' and Tom Connor's 'The Good Old Hockey Game'). Or consider politics, where participants include a retired star (Ken Dryden) who became a cabinet minister; at least two players (Red Kelly and Howie Meeker) who served as MPs *while still players*; and the Senate, where members have included another retired star (Frank Mahovlich); a Stanley-Cup winning coach (Jacques Demers); and even the owner of an NHL team—Hartland Molson of the Montreal Canadiens. Not to mention Jean Béliveau—who turned down an offer from Jean Chrétien to become Governor-General—and a former prime minister (Stephen Harper) who wrote a learned book about hockey while in office.

But while the game's hold on the Canadian psyche seems indisput-

able, it is increasingly tenuous. As noted sportswriter Sean Fitz-Gerald (of the website *The Athletic*) observes in his timely, meticulously-reported new book, *Before the Lights Go Out*, support at the minor hockey level is melting as surely as, well, ice on outdoor rinks in this era of climate change. For years, the number of participants in programs across Canada has been declining, while enrolment in soccer and basketball soars. The reasons include changing demographics, prohibitive equipment and enrolment costs, and concern over the game's physical hazards (especially concussions).

The book's narrative is driven by a season in the life of the Peterborough Petes of the Ontario Hockey League, one of the most iconic junior franchises in Canada. The descriptions and anecdotes will resonate with everyone who has ever spent endless hours in countless rinks, as player, coach, or parent (all three in my case). The book is notable for its sometimes elegiac tone, evidence of the author's love for the game and people within. Sean, inevitably known as 'Fitzy', is a beer league player, hockey dad, and coach of his young son. (Full disclosure: I read his manuscript pre-publication and consider him a friend). His descriptions of conditions on an overnight bus full of sweaty, noisy, amped-up 18 and 19-year-olds en route to or from road games will bring nods of recognition, chuckles, and involuntary shudders.

The author chose Peterborough as his focus because of its stature as a hockey town. It is also, he notes, a famously average "Canadian test market for consumer goods and political policy." As such, the challenges faced by the Petes—and the game—are replicated in countless communities, large and small.

Hockey, as author Roch Carrier observes in an interview in the book, is now so expensive that it "has cut itself from the people who could bring something." A year of Triple A—the highest caliber of minor hockey—can easily cost \$10,000. The game is thus

increasingly reserved for middle-to-high-income families. Even at lower levels, as Sean writes: "An all-day camp on a PA day can cost \$100 (and) a March break camp can cost about as much as a round-trip plane ticket to somewhere warm."

Many families abandon the sport early, or don't start at all. At a school of 400 students less than a kilometre from the Petes rink, minor hockey officials asked one day how many youngsters were playing competitively. The answer: none. To welcome Peterborough's many new Canadians, the Petes offer 50-100 free tickets to games. Many go unused. The most loyal attendees are longtime residents over age 50, and resistant to change. On-ice, there is little evidence of the multicultural society Canada has become; the overwhelming majority of players are white.

Then there is a newish contender for the title of coolest sport: basketball. The Toronto Raptors' NBA title win last season united Canadians on a scale and scope that, as many observers noted, a Stanley Cup win by any of the country's seven NHL teams would not have done.

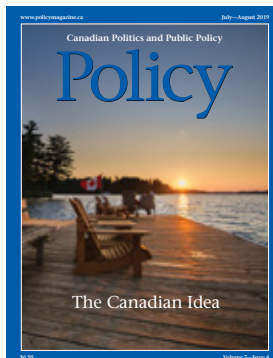
What does that say about the future? Overall, as Sean writes: "That bond (with hockey) is loosening, and that is not a bad thing." With the rise of the Raptors, he adds, "there is a basketball net in our backyard, but for now, hockey will be what crams us together in the car for midwinter drives across town."

That is one of the unchanging rituals of the game that participants complain about but also cherish. Step into a minor hockey rink, and you feel that time has fallen away, and an enduring memory of your youth lives on. For many people, the game's unchanging qualities are among its greatest charms. But they are also, amid the fast-changing country that surrounds it, among its' greatest challenges. **P**

Contributing Writer Anthony Wilson-Smith, president and CEO of Historica Canada, is a former editor-in-chief of Maclean's.

Policy

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An Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Canada

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: A Public Policy Issue that will be supported by all Parties

Your 2020 budget presents a great opportunity to introduce a measure that would stimulate an estimated \$200 million in charitable donations every year and is supported by hospitals, social service agencies, universities and arts and cultural organizations across Canada. If the owner of private company shares or real estate sold the assets to an arm's length party and donated the cash proceeds to a charity within 30 days, the donor would be exempt from capital gains tax, the same treatment as currently applies to gifts of listed securities.

Although you have a minority government, we are confident that all of the opposition parties would be supportive of this measure. Thomas Mulcair, who was leader of the NDP in 2015, was publicly supportive of this measure in the 2015 budget. Gilles Duceppe, when he was Leader of the Bloc Québécois, was supportive of removing the capital gains tax on gifts of listed securities prior to the 2006 budget. He understood that 2/3 of the fiscal cost of these donations was borne by the federal government and only 1/3 by the Quebec government. Obviously, the Conservatives would be supportive of this measure because it was included in their 2015 budget prior to the election of that year. Also, the non-partisan Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector recommended this measure in its June 2019 report.

The case for this measure is compelling. It removes an inequity in the current Income Tax Act as it provides the same tax treatment for donations of all appreciated capital assets – listed securities, private company shares and real estate. Any concern about valuation abuse is addressed by the fact that the donor must sell the asset to an arm's length party. The measure removes a barrier to charitable giving and enables hundreds of thousands of small business owners to give back to their communities and support those in need, as well as the millions of Canadians that benefit from the services provided by our not-for-profit organizations.

It would strengthen your government's relationships with all the provinces and municipalities. 2/3 of the modest fiscal cost is borne by the federal government and 1/3 by the provinces and no cost to the municipalities. Provincially funded hospitals and universities would benefit from increased charitable donations and all not-for-profit organizations in our cities would benefit with no fiscal cost to the municipalities. Including this measure in your 2020 budget would send a positive message to all Canadians, which is timely given the fact that the MPs for each party are concentrated in certain provinces.

Thank you for your consideration. All Canadians would be grateful.

Yours truly,

Donald K. Johnson, O.C., LL.D.

cc: Mr. Andrew Scheer, *Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada*
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, *Leader of the NDP Party of Canada*
M. Yves-François Blanchet, *Chef du Bloc Québécois*
Ms. Elizabeth May, *Leader of the Green Party of Canada*

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