


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Canadian Voters Oust Incumbent for Conservative

By CLIFFORD KRAUSS

TORONTO, Jan. 23 - Stephen Harper and his Conservative Party defeated the long entrenched Liberal Party in Canadian elections on Monday. A Conservative victory is a striking turn in the country's politics and is likely to improve Canada's strained relations with the Bush administration.

Prime Minister Paul Martin had hoped to build on a string of four consecutive Liberal national election victories in the past 13 years, but his campaign was damaged by two years of investigations into party scandals that spurred a backlash and a desire for change.

Mr. Martin tried to cut into Mr. Harper's lead in the final days with a campaign of rancorous advertising, as opinion polls indicated that many urban voters were wary of allowing the country to veer into uncharted ideological waters.

But in the end, Mr. Harper seemed to reassure the public that he had evolved into a centrist in recent years and that his government would emphasize cutting taxes and cleaning up corruption, rather than social issues like abortion and gay rights.

In a concession speech, Mr. Martin announced that he would leave the party leadership before the next national election. "I telephoned Stephen Harper and congratulated him on being chosen by the people of Canada," he said. "We differ on many things, but we all share the belief of the potential and the promise of Canada and the desire of our country to succeed."

Preliminary data showed that the Conservatives won more than 36 percent of the popular vote, and fell short of a majority in the 308-seat House of Commons.

Incomplete results showed the Conservatives leading in 125 districts to 102 for the Liberals, followed by the Bloc Québécois with 51 districts and the labor-aligned New Democratic Party with 29. One independent candidate won.

The Bloc Québécois fell well short of its goal of winning a symbolically important majority in Quebec because of the Conservative gains. The Conservatives showed strength across the country, but particularly in rural and suburban areas.

Mr. Harper, 46, is a free-market economist who expressed strong support for Washington at the time of the American-led invasion of Iraq and shares the Bush administration's skepticism of the Kyoto climate control protocol, which Canada has signed and ratified. His party was formed three years ago as a coalition of two conservative parties.

Such positions are in sharp contrast with those of Prime Minister Martin, who rejected cooperation with President Bush's missile defense program, ratcheted up criticism of American trade policies and

caustically criticized Washington during the campaign for not supporting the Kyoto protocol.

Mr. Harper did not emphasize his closeness to the Bush administration during the campaign, and there was no indication that Canadians had suddenly embraced American foreign policy. Mr. Harper pointedly promised not to send Canadian troops to Iraq, and said he would be a tough bargainer in trade talks with the United States.

But he did promise \$5 billion in new military spending, which would go to forming a new airborne battalion and buying large transport aircraft to airlift troops and supplies during world crises.

By falling far short of winning a clear majority in the House of Commons, Mr. Harper may lead a shaky government and could face another national election within two years.

He will probably have to compromise with lawmakers from three left-of-center parties to pass legislation and remain in power. But in foreign policy the prime minister has broad powers, and he is expected to reach out quickly to Washington to improve a relationship that has been declining since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which Canada opposed.

"It is in the DNA of this Harper government to improve the relationship with Washington," Janice Stein, director of the Munk Center for International Studies at the University of Toronto, said before the vote was counted."

In domestic affairs, Mr. Harper promised to provide allowances to families with children under age 6 to help with child care, to introduce mandatory prison sentences for serious drug trafficking and gun crimes, to reduce the national sales tax and to provide tax breaks for retirees.

Mr. Martin promised a vast government-financed child care program, tax cuts for the middle class and a ban on handguns, and said he was committed to cleaning up pollution in the Great Lakes. He emphasized the period of prosperity and social peace under the recent Liberal governments.

But as Mr. Martin fell behind in the opinion polls, his campaign came to rely on attack advertisements that were unusually caustic for Canada. He tried to depict Mr. Harper as a fanatical American-style conservative and an ally of President Bush, who is unpopular in Canada. The campaign lasted two months, unusually long for Canada, because of holidays. But a turning point came on Boxing Day, the day after Christmas, during a break in the campaigning, when an innocent 15-year-old girl and six others were wounded in a shootout between two gangs in downtown Toronto.

That unusual appearance of public lawlessness was followed by hints of lawlessness within the government. On Dec. 28, the federal police announced that they were opening a criminal investigation of what appeared to be a flurry of insider trading, set off by what some suspect were leaks from the Finance Ministry about changes in taxes on dividends and income trusts.

"The biggest surprise of the campaign was the breakthrough Mr. Harper made in Quebec, where the Conservatives have been weak for a generation. By taking votes from the Bloc Québécois, he dealt a blow to a sovereignty movement that had been rebounding on a wave of anger over Liberal scandals.

"That there is a room for a new federalist voice in Quebec is a Rubicon," said Antonia Maioni, a political scientist at McGill University.

Canada in for elections as govt falls

DAVID LJUNGGREN
& RANDALL PALMER

OTTAWA, NOVEMBER 29

CANADA'S shaky minority Liberal government lost a vote of confidence 171-133 on Monday, ending a 17-month stay in office that was largely overshadowed by a patronage scandal.

Prime Minister Paul Martin, a former popular finance minister, took over as prime minister in December 2003 with hopes of spending a decade in power. But he ran into trouble in February 2004 when it was revealed that C\$100 million in government advertising and sponsorship contracts had been funneled to Liberal-friendly firms for little or no work.



Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin (front) acknowledges the applause from his caucus after the voting. Reuters

The opposition said the scandal—still one of the main driving forces in Canadian politics—was the main reason they pressed for a quick election. “We have to clean things up. We have a lot of cleaning up to do,” said Conservative leader Stephen Harper.

Martin told supporters he would run on the government's economic record.

The Liberals have been in power since 1993, when they inherited a C\$42 billion budget deficit from the Conservatives. That deficit is long gone and unemployment is at a 30-year low. “We will be entering this campaign on a balance sheet we can be proud of...the result of the hard work and the good management of a Liberal government,” Martin said. —Reuters

'Sorry' Canada PM wants more time

Reuters
Ottawa, April 22

23/4/05

A CONTRITE Canadian Prime Minister, battling to avoid defeat at the hands of opposition parties over a cash-for-favours scandal, pleaded on Friday for more time in office while dismissing demands that he resign. In a rare national address on Thursday, Paul Martin apologised for the scandal and said he would call an election as soon as an inquiry into the alleged kickbacks finished its work in December.

But opposition parties mocked Martin's offer and seem set to topple the minority Liberal government next month and force a June



Paul Martin

27 election. Canada's last election was in June 2004. Martin appeared on two of Canada's main television networks early on Friday at the start of a media blitz to persuade the country that an election should wait until after the inquiry finishes

its work.

The inquiry, headed by Justice John Gomery, has heard that money from a sponsorship program, designed to promote national unity and counter separatism in French-speaking Quebec, saw big kickbacks going to the Liberals in return for government contracts.

The scandal is the biggest crisis to hit the Liberals since they took power in November 1993. Polls indicate that if an election were held now the main opposition Conservative Party would win power, albeit with a minority government. Asked whether there was any chance Martin might quit, the PM's chief spokesman, Scott Reid, said: "No."

23 APR 2005

THE HUSTAN TIMES

Kanishka verdict shocks victims' kin

'IT IS A SECOND TRAGEDY... JUSTICE WAS NOT SERVED'



UNDER A CLOUD: Ajaib Singh Bagri walks out of the British Columbia Supreme Court after his acquittal on Wednesday. — AFP

VANCOUVER, March 17. — Stunned by the acquittal of the main accused in the Kanishka bombing case, relatives of the victims who perished in the crash 20 years ago, termed the judgment as a "second tragedy" and demanded the Canadian government convene a public inquiry.

A British Columbia Supreme Court judge yesterday found Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri not guilty in the Air India bombing which killed all 329 people on board

off the Irish Coast in 1985.

The families said the "not guilty" verdict yesterday meant that they were suffering yet another tragedy. "The verdict is a second tragedy... Justice was not served. There must be a public inquiry. Canadians deserve that, victims deserve that," Mr Sushell Gupta, who lost his mother in the bombing, said.

"This is not fair for those families whose loved ones are lost... there should be a public inquiry. Every Canadian has the right to

The other side

FEROZEPUR, March 17. — While the Canadian court's decision to acquit the two main accused in the Kanishka bombing case has left the families of those killed in the crash stunned, a relative of one of the undertrials Ripudaman Singh Malik has welcomed the judgement. At his ancestral house here, his aged aunt Surinder Kaur while expressing contentment over the court's decision said she knew from the very beginning that "Ripudaman cannot be a party to such a ghastly act". She also ridiculed the charges made out against him by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. — PTI

an answer. Something went wrong. Everyone's disappointed," a spokesman for the Sikh Khalsa Diwan Society said.

Canadian public safety minister Ms Anne McLellan would not commit to holding a public inquiry. She said she would have to be convinced that there was further evidence that the 23-month trial did not turn up, to justify a public probe. "It is way too soon for anyone in the government to say if there would be any use of a public inquiry."

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