

Erin O'Toole's platform is imaginative, but Maxime Bernier is the most impressive leader

by Conrad Black



Maxime Bernier

Bleary-eyed and almost gasping for air, I can confirm to the 99.9 per cent of Canadians who don't read the platforms of political parties at the onset of an election campaign that they are not missing a great deal in profound thought, stylish composition, or uplifting incitements to patriotic exaltation of the soul. I did not go beyond the Liberals and Conservatives because they are the only parties that have any chance of forming a government, and in any case I protest against the exclusion from the debates of Maxime Bernier who is probably the most impressive of the party leaders and has the best program in many respects. He is being discriminated against by the debates commission. That commission is providing instant translation of the English and French debates between the other five party leaders in Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic, Punjabi, Plains Cree, inuktitut, Dene, Tagalog, and both American and Québec sign language. But it is providing no translation in the language of the following distinguished and in Canada comparatively numerous civilizations all of which are, accordingly and in the good company of Maxime Bernier, the victims of discrimination: German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese. I do not begrudge any of those who are receiving translations of what promises to be the stimulating exchanges between five of the party leaders

but on behalf of the cultures of Goethe, Dante, Joseph Conrad, Tolstoy, Cervantes, and other eminent pillars of advanced civilization, as well as Maxime Bernier, I protest.

The Liberal platform promises an additional \$78 billion of spending towards the usual categories of voters it wishes to attract but apart from the usual pieties about ensuring that wealthy corporations and individuals “pay their fair share,” it gives no hint of savings or revenue increases, and ignores the deficit altogether. The inference is incited that as the public-health crisis tapers off, the federal government’s books will move determinedly towards balance, but this is not identified as a goal and no reader of the Liberal platform would imagine that the leadership of that party attaches the slightest importance to deficit reduction. The Liberals do not present their platform on the Internet in a way that makes it easy for the public to read it in detail. The summary for general consumption is confined to a few bullet points under a number of ergonomic icons. Under “Homes” we are comforted by the Liberal party’s determination to “protect your rights,” and to “take action against speculators.” No one has ever explained what is so sociopathic and destructive about people who speculate in residential real estate. While it is conceivable that it slightly raises the price of homes, the speculation is almost always at the higher end of the market and has the more general effect of raising the value of residential homes, of enriching, at least theoretically, all homeowners. Nor did the liberals elaborate on how they will “unlock homeownership for the middle class.” They do promise 1.4 million new homes, presumably by incentivizing the private sector to build them. The thought of the federal government becoming a serious residential housing developer itself is, to say the least, disconcerting.

In health care, there are the usual platitudes about giving more money to the provinces, hiring more doctors and nurses, and other medical personnel and increasing accessibility. The

promise of "better long-term care," after the disaster of the coronavirus in homes for the elderly and the growth of Medical Assistance In Dying, (M.A.I.D.), into a Frankenstein monster encouraging the elderly to commit suicide in order to ameliorate the chronic rationing of health care to the entire population and the sky-rocketing cost of the health-care system, strains credulity. The Liberal determination in "protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights" is assumedly the customary official prostration before the advocates of mass therapeutic abortions. If it implies any government role in our sex lives, it is time for all Canadians to pray in the manner of their own choosing. In the section on the economy, the Liberal sloganeers are again rather disappointing: they will "bring all businesses along to recovery and support them to hire the help they need." As a generally self-employed person I welcome the Liberal pledge to create "a better employment insurance system to support gig workers and the self-employed." I shall look forward to that, (if they are re-elected). In any case, we are assured that the Liberals will be "creating opportunities for everyone." The green section is the usual promise of green jobs and elimination of carbon emissions on absurdly impractical and in any case undesirable timetables. What is now called "reconciliation" inevitably consists of the promise to "confront the legacy of residential schools" as if this prime minister's false and shameful proclamation that Canada was guilty of attempted genocide and the billions of dollars that have been deluged on native leadership have been insufficient for those purposes. The customary inveighing against "systemic racism" and the determination to "protect the well-being of Indigenous children and families," truisms that are probably sewn into the band of the prime minister's underwear, rounded out the Liberal platform summary; a dreary and atonal election tocsin.

The Conservatives make the entire platform much more accessible and lead into it with photographs of their new

leader Erin O'Toole in T-shirt with rippling muscles apparently imitating Vladimir Putin. This document too is not short on clichés: "creating opportunity in all sectors of the economy and all parts of the country." They too will give more money to the provinces to incentivize employers to provide mental-health coverage. That sort of tax credit is likely to be more productive than simply throwing money at the provinces as Liberals intend to do. The Conservatives do show a bit of initiative on the environment and pledge to end the ban on West Coast shipping traffic, build the Trans Mountain pipeline, agitate for the Keystone XL pipeline where Trudeau just rolled over like a poodle for the American Democrats, and the Conservatives will put a stop to illegal anti-infrastructure protests by native groups and others, a commendable ambition. They are also more sober on the environment, emphasizing research and improving the quality of drinking water (where Trudeau has failed to deliver for the native people), and traditional, legitimate pollution reduction. The "low carbon savings account," whatever it is, must be preferable to the Liberals over-flogged horse of a carbon tax.

The Conservatives show some imagination in promising to protect animals from cruel owners and to attack fraudulent breeders of pets; to restrain the macabre Medical Assistance In Dying regime, and to approach our NATO two per cent of GDP for national defence commitment, to modernize NORAD, to "uncouple critical parts of our assembly chain from China," and there are some interesting and generous cultural proposals and a commendable determination to prevent the American social media platform cartel from assaulting freedom of expression as it has in the United States. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, (which uttered many untruths and was anything but conciliatory), is treated with too much deference; the commissioners should be invited to make their recommendations conform to the evidence they have adduced, but at this point and I cannot reproach the Conservative leadership for not

wishing to tackle that sacred cow – there are many legitimate Indigenous grievances (which the Liberals have failed to address), and reconciliation won't be achieved in an election campaign. The Conservatives have written a respectably precise and imaginative platform, unlike their chief opponents.

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