

# Trudeau has failed. Voters should toss him out

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by Conrad Black



If Stephen Harper had retired five years ago, as many advised, he would be regarded as one of the country's outstanding prime ministers and would have been spared the ultimate defeat that has needlessly ended the careers of many other leaders, including such distinguished statesmen as Laurier, St. Laurent, Adenauer, de Gaulle, Thatcher and Helmut Kohl. But he went for a fourth straight election without some of his best ministers, including the late Jim Flaherty, John Baird and Peter MacKay, was more dictatorial than ever, conducted a completely incompetent campaign based on women's headgear in public places and a conjured threat of mass migration from the Middle East, and was sent to the showers.

As I wrote here in the past two weeks, for four years we have had image government from his successor; pandering to voting sub-groups in a politically atomized country. All emphasis has been on unlimited pursuit of a pristine environment and the manipulation of gender issues and native policy. The government has declared the objective of “phasing out” fossil fuels (Alberta’s), with no regard to the resulting impoverishment of that province, and with the unnecessary continuation of Canada as an oil-importing country. The Canadian environment is not deteriorating, and climate alarm is being propagated for discreditable motives and with undesirable consequences.

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Gender is a political red herring, as there is not a significant number of Canadians who harbour prejudices against people on the basis of sex or sexual orientation, and apart from reinforcing that freedom, the Trudeau government has massively overstressed these issues, which are not contentious, productive or even relevant. Native peoples’ questions have been focused on as part of the hunt for abuses to oppose, but no discernible material progress has been made to resolve their many problems. What has occurred is an improvement on the Harper policy of building more prisons to house native offenders, but that is damning with the faintest of praise. The lively diversion of marijuana legalization has been a fiasco because those licensed to produce and sell are constrained by rules that make it impossible for them to compete with the illegal providers.

Capital flows out of Canada are catastrophically large, a grim and inescapable omen for the near future, as money votes with its feet over where it chooses to generate economic growth – the only possible source of increased prosperity. Unemployment is low because of the coattails of the Trump economic boom and

an expanding public sector (paid for with deficit-spending).



Supporters of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion rally outside the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton on April 12, 2018. David Bloom/Postmedia News

Trudeau's father was re-elected because of a comprehensive plan to defeat Quebec separatism and some significant social reforms. Brian Mulroney was re-elected advocating free trade with the United States and reduced income tax with revenue replaced by a Goods and Service Tax, a partially voluntary tax system. Jean Chrétien faced an opposition so divided that he was under no threat of defeat, apart from within his own party (which evicted him eventually), but he and Stephen Harper governed prudently, if not with great imagination, and were rewarded at the polls for being sensible.

This government has such a weak record, it has tried to sell its oppressive political correctness as a beatific aura that is itself a distinguished national achievement. This is what made the blackface incidents so embarrassing. It has resorted to an increasingly irritating assault on the Conservatives as primitive, harsh, stingy and un-Canadian. The Liberals have tried to frighten the country with the spectre of a bigoted and reactionary Tory regime, greasing the palms of the rich, trampling over the working and middle-income people, and imposing an anti-abortion regression into Victorian hypocrisy, while the environment is handed over to coal-belching factories emitting diluvian inundations of effluent. This is so fatuous a caricature, Liberal advertising is reduced to trying to induce the country to forget these four wasted years by invoking Harper's stolid personality and hammering Ontario's Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford like a piñata as he cleans up after four terms of horrifying Liberal incompetence.

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The Liberals' complacency has caught up with them in Quebec. They have won the federal elections in Quebec over the Conservatives since the rise of Laurier 123 years ago, except for the two elections of Conservative Quebecer Brian Mulroney, and Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis' delivery of 50 Quebec MPs to the Progressive Conservatives under John Diefenbaker in 1958 (in revenge for the federal Liberals' successful intervention against him in the 1939 provincial election). But Quebec will only give practically its entire block of MPs to a federal Liberal leader whom the province respects to represent it in the world: Laurier, Ernest Lapointe as Mackenzie King's virtual co-premier, Louis St. Laurent, Pierre Trudeau. It never gave heavy support to Jean Chrétien, and it is becoming clear that it will not give an unambiguous endorsement to Justin Trudeau. In these circumstances, the separatist Bloc Québécois (an absurd party in a federal election but potentially important), appears to be cutting seriously into the Liberal Quebec vote, as Réal Couette's Creditistes did in the Sixties, and Jack Layton's NDP did in 2011. The Bloc may take enough Quebec MPs to make the Conservatives the largest party overall and enable them to form a government and enact at least some of the sensible program they have presented as the only plausible alternative to Liberal flimflam. It is indicative of the panic in Liberal headquarters that they solicited and received the very inappropriate endorsement of former U.S. president Barack Obama (another suave image but unsuccessful leader, and a Canadian election is no business of his).

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The most important factor to consider before voting, which the government has desperately ignored, is its own conduct. This regime has banned Liberal candidates of pro-life views even if they believe in the right to an abortion. (This is the personal view of Andrew Scheer.) They made pro-abortion views

a pre-condition to some categories of government-sponsored summer employment. The prime minister lied to Canadians over the SNC-Lavalin affair and was excoriated by the non-partisan ethics commissioner Mario Dion (traditionally a cause of ineligibility to continue in office). And this government falsely prosecuted the former vice chief of the defence staff, Vice-Admiral Mark Norman, over a policy difference. It is the time-honoured practice to retire or move senior military personnel with whom the government has a deep disagreement. It is unheard-of in this country to prosecute such a person for a crime the government had no reason to believe was committed, and to attempt to prevail by denying the defendant the means assured to members of the military to pay for proper counsel pending adjudication. It was the most disgraceful single abuse of power by the federal government at least since Diefenbaker falsely implied that the governor of the Bank of Canada, James E. Coyne, had wrongfully increased his pension (in 1959).



Vice-Admiral Mark Norman and his lawyer, Marie Henein, speak with the media on May 8, 2019, after Crown prosecutors dropped a breach of trust case against him. Errol McGihon/Postmedia News

A government that would reject candidates and refuse to hire summer job applicants because of their conscientious views of moral issues, lie to the public and deliberately level false criminal charges against a distinguished senior naval officer over policy matters, should not be re-elected. The Liberals had a clear mandate in 2015 and did not fulfill it. "They have been weighed in the balance and they have been found wanting." It's time for regime change.

First published in the