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**2015 Federal Election Analysis**  
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## Trudeau Liberals Sweep to Resounding Federal Win

### ***New Majority Government Has Important Implications for Many Ontario Policy Issues***

*In the Internet age where election results and commentary are available with a click, we won't waste time with the riding-by-riding overview. Here at Counsel, we want to focus on what these results mean for pursuing your issues with government, both at the national level and here in Ontario. Make no mistake: the new government in Ottawa will have implications for Ontario issues – many, though not all of them, positive.*

*For full election results, see the Elections Canada website at:*

<http://enr.elections.ca/National.aspx?lang=e>

*Excellent in-depth coverage and commentary can be found on many news sites, including the Globe and Mail at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/federal-election-2015/>*

After an unprecedented 78 day campaign, Canada's 42<sup>nd</sup> federal election ended in extraordinary success for Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party of Canada. The next generation of Trudeaumania has seen the Liberals rise from third party status with only 36 seats, to a strong victory with a healthy majority in the House of Commons. No party, no leader has ever risen so far in a single election. With 184 seats across the country, including substantial gains in the West and massive breakthroughs in Ontario and Quebec, the Liberals have much to crow about.

A year ago, such results seemed within their grasp. Two months ago, many thought the window had evaporated for Trudeau, with the NDP seemingly holding the mantle as the pre-ordained 'Anyone-But-Harper' alternative.

Trudeau and his team deserve great credit for sticking to their game plan and finding a path back to the top. They knew that a majority of Canadians were ready to move on from Stephen Harper, but many voters were unsure of which opposition party represented the best hope for change. Going into the election, Tom Mulcair's NDP seemed to have the wind at their backs. However, by adopting a risk-averse "front runner" strategy, the NDP undermined their claim to be true "agents of change" and played into the Liberal approach.

The Liberals ran the strongest campaign, with a consistently positive message, highly effective advertising, a strong team of credible candidates and a leader who more than met the test of five debates and grew in stature throughout the campaign.

Knowing that Stephen Harper has never been anyone's idea of warm and fuzzy, the Conservative campaign focused on competence, economic record and attacks on Trudeau as "just not ready". As Trudeau weathered the storm and ultimately thrived over the lengthy campaign, the Conservative approach backfired. By sticking to their focused, positive approach, Justin Trudeau and his Liberal team performed masterfully.

Critics and commentators will say that Stephen Harper deserved to lose, not only because he had exhausted public tolerance for his rigid personality after a decade in power, but because of the negative tactics the Conservatives utilized throughout the campaign. Attempts to polarize voters around controversial “wedge issues” like the niqab issue, mistruths about opposition positions on cutting pension sharing for seniors or support for brothels, and his government’s own record on climate change, drove far more voters to the Liberals than they gained for the Conservatives.

At the same time, the NDP lead during the summer was largely a “parked vote” as Canadians waited to determine which party presented the most credible anti-Harper alternative. This provided a growing base of supporters that fueled the steady rise of the Liberals over the past month.

The scope of the changes is illustrated by the table below, showing party seats nationally and in Ontario at dissolution and after last night’s election. The Liberal growth from 36 seats nationally and only 13 in Ontario to 184 and 80 respectively is astounding.

<b>PARTY</b>	<b>Canada - at dissolution</b>	<b>Canada – 2015 election</b>	<b>Ontario – at dissolution</b>	<b>Ontario – 2015 election</b>
	<b>36</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>80</b>
	<b>159</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>33</b>
	<b>95</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Of course, the Liberal victory was not just achieved in Ontario. The Liberals won seats in every province and territory – an unprecedented result. They swept Atlantic Canada, made huge gains from the NDP in Québec, made their strongest showing in years in British Columbia, captured all three Territories and even won Prairie seats in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Justin Trudeau can truly claim to have a national mandate.

With the Tories facing a leadership competition to replace Stephen Harper, and Tom Mulcair likely to be fighting for his life (if he decides to try to hang on), the Liberals will have a fairly easy ride for the first few months. Their immediate focus will be on getting off to a strong start, swearing in a cabinet, drafting a throne speech and implementing their economic plan.

Trudeau has both experienced veterans and a wealth of new talent to choose from in shaping his cabinet. Indeed, his caucus will be among the most diverse ever seen in the country. Groups traditionally unrepresented or under-represented now have a presence in the Parliament of Canada, typified by newly-elected MP Robert-Falcon Ouellette in Winnipeg Centre, a Cree-Métis academic and military veteran, or Canada's first Somali-Canadian MP, Ahmed Hussen in York South-Weston, a former war refugee and lawyer.

(Indeed, in a fitting response to the anti-Islamic tone of the Conservative campaign, Canadians elected a strong contingent of new MPs of Muslim background. In addition to Hussen, these elected members include Iqra Khalid, Yasmin Ratansi, Majid Jowhari, Fayçal El-Khoury and Omar Alghabra).

### **Implications for Ontario**

There is no doubt that Ontario is a big winner in last night's results. This applies to both the province as a whole and the incumbent Ontario Liberal government. Trudeau owes the province's voters and Kathleen Wynne's party for the support that got him over the top.

Alone among provincial premiers, Wynne stepped forward to aggressively support her federal counterpart, appearing at rallies side-by-side with Trudeau as well as canvassing tirelessly in a host of ridings. Liberal staff and MPP's dispatched from Queen's Park made a huge contribution on the ground in Ontario.

The ties between the two parties go deep. Many of Trudeau's senior advisors, including his friend and senior strategist Gerald Butts and campaign manager Katie Telford, came out of the Liberal ranks at Queen's Park. Some current QP staffers will undoubtedly make their way to new jobs in Ottawa, further cross-pollinating the provincial and federal parties.

While there is a tradition of Ontario running against the federal government, and even parties of the same stripe at the two levels striking fairly antagonistic positions, for the foreseeable future there is likely to be little daylight between the two.

At the same time, a federal Liberal government will provide new opportunities for Opposition Leader Patrick Brown and the provincial Tories. No longer will the Ontario Liberals be able to easily deflect issues by condemning the lack of support/funding from the federal government. As well, a host of

experienced Ottawa Conservative staff and party insiders will be looking for new places to hang their hats, some of whom may ultimately fill important roles at the provincial level.

While the demise of the Harper government will, in some ways, remove a weight from the neck of the Ontario PC party, Brown and his colleagues need to study carefully the lessons of October 19<sup>th</sup>. Brown won the PC leadership over Christine Elliott and the moderate wing of his party partly by courting the most right-wing elements of certain ethnic communities. While he has subsequently taken a step back from cozying up to those fighting the sex education curriculum, for example, the gross failure of the Harper/Kenney attempts to court ethnic communities and the Conservative eradication in urban and suburban seats in Ontario carries warnings for the provincial party. They need to find a small-c conservative approach to modern urbanized Ontario or risk the same fate as the provincial party in 2014 and the federal party last night.

For stakeholders, the environment at the federal level is likely to be more receptive to new ideas and opportunities than in recent years, when the Harper PMO exercised extraordinary control over all ministries. On a number of key issues, the new federal-provincial alignment may present positive opportunities, as well as some challenges, in Ontario:

- **Pension Reform** -- The proposal for an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan was a centrepiece of the last provincial campaign and the 2015 Budget. Premier Wynne has said all along that this was a second choice route – she would have preferred an expansion of the Canada Pension Plan for all workers, but was stymied by the federal Tories. It's highly likely that the ORPP will now be put on hold while a new federal Liberal government negotiates with all provinces around CPP reforms.
- **Infrastructure** -- Both the provincial and federal Liberals made infrastructure funding a key element of their short-term economic stimulus programs and long-term economic development. With Justin Trudeau committed to a \$60 billion infrastructure program, including at least \$2 billion for Ontario's rail electrification program, expect to see a series of "good news" infrastructure agreements unfolding in the coming months.
- **Climate Change** -- While Stephen Harper and many of his colleagues had an ideological objection to recognizing or acting on climate change, the federal Liberals have taken a much stronger stance. Nevertheless, they have not committed to introducing a federal carbon tax or cap-and-trade program, but said they will work with the provinces to try coordinate a national strategy. With Ontario in the process of developing its own cap-and-trade program to tie into the Québec and California initiatives, and Alberta looking at developing its own carbon solutions, it will be interesting to see whether the Trudeau government can find a consensus on how to move forward.
- **Aboriginal Affairs** -- Relationships with Canada's First Nations are challenging for any government. The Liberal Party of Canada has pledged to develop a new relationship with aboriginal groups, including improvements to the funding of education, both on- and off-

reserve. Although First Nations deal with Ottawa on a government to government basis, the state of that relationship can have a significant impact at the provincial level as Queen's Park strives to negotiate on a range of issues from resource management to land claims settlement.

- **Health Care Funding** -- The Trudeau Liberals have committed to negotiating a new health record with the provinces to replace the 6% annual funding agreement implemented by the previous Liberal government. Yet healthcare is a big ticket item with complicated details, and agreements on a funding model or other major proposals like a National Pharmacare program are unlikely to happen quickly. Still, the mood concerning federal/provincial health cooperation will be far more optimistic among Ontario bureaucrats and healthcare workers than over the last several years.
- **Equalization/Fiscal Balance** – Ontario has long complained that even in tough economic times, taxpayers suffer from a huge imbalance in the amount of money that goes to Ottawa versus what comes back in benefits. It will not be easy for the Trudeau government to change that balance in a big way, but the issue will certainly gain far more attention than it has in recent years. Given the fiscal room to manoeuvre is so much greater at the federal level than in Ontario, Premier Wynne is sure to push her case forcefully.
- **The Trans-Pacific Partnership** -- Federal Liberals have supported the TPP in principle, but not surprisingly, refused to endorse Stephen Harper's specific deal as no one has yet seen a copy of the draft agreement. In particular, the Liberals may ask hard questions about key provisions related to agricultural protection and the auto industry. However, their ability to re-negotiate clauses of the agreement will be significantly limited given the structure of the 12 country negotiating mechanism. In the end, the more active debate may be what kind of financial support and transition mechanisms the Trudeau Liberals can provide to help implement the TPP agreement.
- **Ring of Fire Development** – In the last provincial Budget, Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa harshly attacked the lack of federal support for the development of the mineral-rich Ring of Fire in Northern Ontario. While the federal Liberals have made no commitment in their platform, that's not going to prevent Minister Sousa and Premier Wynne from pushing hard for federal funding support to help open up this new economic front in the North.

It's a new era, and Counsel looks forward to working with you provincially and federally to achieve your government relations goals.

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