

Writ Large: the 2015 General Election from Month to Month

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Since the major national media forgot to call the leader of the Christian Heritage Party to ask my opinion about what will be one of the longest election campaigns in Canadian history, I am offering this public response to the unnecessarily premature launch of Election 2015. Now that the campaign has begun, our candidates will be getting out on the streets and up to the doorsteps across this nation to tell voters about Canada's only federal pro-life, pro-family, common-sense, small-government, freedom-loving party. The CHP is in the running and we are determined that our message will be heard!

Never would I have guessed that the Prime Minister would have used his advantage of incumbency to subject Canadians to an 11-week election campaign. Sure, he faced mounting pressures to do so: the third party lobbies were spending a lot of money to sway public opinion against the Conservatives and yes, the Conservatives had a big wad burning a hole in their pocket...so why wait? The timing appeared advantageous to the ruling party and some speculate that they felt confident that they could outspend their opponents and simply overwhelm the public with "positive spin".

However, things are often not what they appear. Right out of the gate, the PM faced questions about the timing and the length of the campaign. Here's where he stumbled, only minutes after asking the Governor General to dissolve Parliament. He was asked about the cost of the campaign to taxpayers. I fully expected him to answer these questions in a straightforward manner. He did not.

Instead of acknowledging that taxpayers will share the cost of a campaign over twice the length of average, he claimed that he called the election early so that taxpayers would not have to pay for the campaign. "It's important that these campaigns be funded by the parties themselves rather than taxpayers," he said. He could have talked about the unfairness of unions using the dues of their members to attack the government. He could have owned up to the additional cost to taxpayers and simply said, "There's too much at stake to leave this in the hands of third parties". But, by blatantly denying the facts and repeating his assertion that taxpayers will not be paying for the 78-day campaign, he gave the impression of a desperate man willing to ignore the truth in order to retain power. I wish he had told the truth.

The truth is that the extended campaign period will cost taxpayers over one hundred million dollars. The direct cost alone of Elections Canada offices and personnel will likely increase from an average campaign historical cost of \$375 million to about \$500 million, according to estimates from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Then there are the rebates to political parties and candidates. Taxpayers will rebate them for their expenditures up to 50% and 60% respectively for each party or candidate who achieves 10% or more of the popular vote. Parties, which were allowed to spend \$25 million in previous campaigns, will now be allowed to spend over \$50 million. The rebate cost to taxpayers in 2011 was approximately \$60 million. Expect that to more than double.

How does an economist like Mr. Harper not seem to understand the implications to taxpayers? Mr. Harper is not stupid. I have to conclude that he knows very well that taxpayers will be bearing the financial costs as well as the disruptive social costs of this election marathon. Perhaps, he just hopes Canadians will forget how the campaign started and focus on other issues. What might those be?

Certainly not abortion, not if the PM has his way. The fact that we are terminating the equivalent of 4,000 classrooms of children each year is something he does NOT want to talk about. But we do. We think how you treat the vulnerable and defenceless is at least as important as balancing the budget. In fact, protecting life might help us to balance the budget. Approximately 900,000 babies have been killed by abortion since the Conservatives have been in power. Had they been born, they would have added to the nation's economic growth, first as consumers and later as producers. Children need food, toys and clothes. They need teachers. As young adults, they buy houses and cars and build businesses. Children have value, not only for their intrinsic worth as human beings but also for their creative potential.

What does Mr. Harper want to talk about? Several times, he has mentioned balanced budgets. The PM claims he wants to run on his economic record. Does he have a record to crow about? He spoke as if the Conservatives have been consistently running balanced budgets. On the contrary, the past 7 years have been 7 years of budget deficits, not surpluses. During the 2008 election campaign, he stated emphatically that the Conservatives would NOT be running a deficit; then they ran the highest deficit in Canadian history. During the 2011 election, he promised that the budget would be balanced by 2014-2015. It wasn't. Now he claims that the budget will be balanced by next Spring. But, economic trends indicate otherwise. The Conservatives have added over \$150 billion to the national debt. Debt service charges cost Canadian taxpayers over \$75 million every single day! The fact that the Liberals or the NDP would likely do worse does not mean that chronic deficits are acceptable. Those who have had the opportunity to govern must stand on their record. The promises of politicians are often viewed with suspicion. Buying votes with taxpayers' money is always a strong temptation. At the end of the day, money spent has to be repaid and the only source of revenue is taxes. The Christian Heritage Party has consistently promoted mandatory balanced budgets and a plan to pay off the national debt like a household mortgage.

Even now, on the eve of this campaign, the PM and his cabinet ministers have been flying across the country doling out money to a variety of their favourite causes and constituencies. To deny that this has been a "softening-up" campaign to gain public favour using taxpayers' money is a transparent attempt to fool voters. I can't believe that the PM would believe that Canadians would believe his story that "since he wants the parties to play by the rules, he's called a 78-day election campaign to keep things fair".

No, this was a move of desperation and calculated, or prepared for, long in advance. It was changes in electoral finance under Bill C-23, which was passed last year, that increased the spending limits and gave us this prospect of 11 weeks of partisan posturing.

The Christian Heritage Party comes off the blocks with the wind at our backs, our principles intact, our candidates committed, and our hearts hopeful that 2015 may be the year when voters choose to send some of our candidates to the House of Commons! God helping us, we intend to bring common sense, decency and a respect for justice back to Canada.

The Christian Heritage Party of Canada

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