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TACTIX Campaign Pulse 2019 brings you the latest on the 2019 Canadian federal election. Each Campaign Pulse update delivers news and analysis from TACTIX' team of government relations and public affairs specialists.

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Campaign Pulse 2019 – Post-Election Edition

Canadian voters – albeit not nearly enough – have spoken. As the dust settled on election night, no single party had won the hearts and minds of Canadians in sufficient number to secure a majority of the seats in the House of Commons. And so, for the fourth time in fifteen years, we have a hung Parliament.

In this, the final edition of Campaign Pulse 2019, we look into the divisions in Canada's body politic that became evident on October 21st, including some historical context, discuss some of the challenges facing Prime Minister Trudeau as he confronts a House of Commons in which his government must rely upon the votes of MPs other than Liberals to move his legislative agenda forward, and look ahead to what will transpire in the weeks to come.

But first, here are some key numbers to ponder, comparing the outcomes of the 2019 and 2015 elections:

Political Party	Seats 2019 Election	Seats 2015 Election	Popular Vote 2019 Election	Popular Vote 2015 Election
Liberal	157	184	33%	40%
Conservative	121	99	34%	32%
Bloc Quebecois	32	10	8%*	5%*
NDP	24	44	16%	20%
Green	3	1	6%	3%

*The Bloc Quebecois popular vote numbers are national; however, they only run candidates in Quebec.

Is Canada More Divided Today Than Ever Before?

The Trudeau government went into the October election with a handful of seats in Alberta. On election night, Prime Minister Trudeau's Liberal Party lost all of their seats in Alberta and were shut out entirely from representation in the House of Commons from that province. These losses contributed to the reduction of a Liberal majority to a minority government in Ottawa. Serious concerns arose about the deep regional fault lines that became so readily apparent that night.

Does this all sound familiar? It should. This was the precise scenario that emerged on election night, October 30th, 1972. As Yogi Berra, the famous mangler of language and sage former catcher and manager of the New York Yankees said years ago, "It was déjà vu all over again."

We recount the uncanny parallels between 1972 and 2019 to illustrate the point that we should exercise caution when we assess whether Canada is more divided today than ever before.

Certainly, the outcome of the election this week revealed some clear and potentially dangerous fault lines in Canada's body politic. The Liberals were shut out completely in Alberta and Saskatchewan, losing two Cabinet Ministers in the process. The Conservatives failed to make major inroads into Canada's largest urban centres, notably in seat-rich Ontario generally, and in the 905 area specifically. The separatist Bloc Quebecois (Bloc) rose from the political ashes, securing over forty per cent of Quebec's 78 seats in the House of Commons, effectively blocking the Liberals from enjoying a second majority government.

before in its history. To that, we say, “hold on”.

We can open our history books and read about the Conscription Crisis of 1917, which created a deeply serious and violent divide between English and French Canadians over the federal government’s decision to make military service mandatory in the latter years of World War I. Or, we could recall the Manitoba School Question, when Manitoba’s provincial government abolished funding for Catholic schools. The uproar created by this decision revealed fault lines on religious and regional grounds, ultimately becoming the dominant issue in the 1896 national election, leading to the downfall of the government of the day.

Or, if you prefer something more recent, we can reflect upon the outcome of the 1993 federal election. That was the one resulting in the Bloc Quebecois forming the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. This was a sobering prospect for Canadians outside Quebec. Moreover, Western Canadians expressed their “The West Wants In” alienation from the rest of Canada by sending 52 members of the Reform Party to Ottawa. Sure, one difference between 1993 and 2019 is that the Liberals secured a majority of the seats in the former. But significant provincial and regional fissures were readily apparent over 25 years ago.

We in no way diminish the challenges facing Prime Minister Trudeau and his newly-elected caucus, based on the deep divides that the election results reveal. However, it is important to examine these results in their proper historical context, and not conclude that what we confront today has never happened before.

Government by Brokerage

In [Volume IV of Campaign Pulse 2019](#), we foreshadowed the likely prospect of a hung Parliament, and examined some of the important features of running a minority government in Ottawa. Of the two approaches to managing a minority government’s policy and legislative agenda that we considered in Volume IV, it is clear that Prime Minister Trudeau intends to adopt the government by brokerage approach.

On the campaign trail, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh raised the prospect of participating in a coalition government. To use a football analogy, this was a Hail Mary pass with no chance of being completed in the end zone. Since 1867, Canada has had exactly one government that could be described as a

week's election, Prime Minister Trudeau took little time to squash the notion of forming a coalition with the NDP or with any other party.

The brokerage approach should serve the minority government well. Before each piece of legislation comes forward in the House, the government will have secured the support of at least one opposition party to ensure its passage.

For example, the Bill ratifying the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) would not be supported by the NDP, the Bloc or the Green Party. However, the government would look for support from the Conservatives, even though Andrew Scheer gave the free trade agreement a rough ride during the election campaign. Blocking CUSMA is not the hill the Conservatives would wish to die on. The Liberals and the Conservatives would also be aligned in the House on legislation involving the construction of pipelines or other energy projects in Western Canada.

On the other hand, with regard to legislation dealing with climate change or certain social policy issues, the government would look to the NDP and the Green Party for support (and while not necessarily seeking it, would likely get the support of the Bloc if it was in Quebec's best interests). This is how minority governments survive.

The Power of One-Third

The simple fraction, one-third, ended up playing an interesting role on election night. First, **one-third** of eligible voters chose to NOT exercise their right to vote. This is disappointing to contemplate. In fact, on a national basis, voter turnout declined from 68 per cent in 2015 to 66 per cent in 2019.

Perhaps the time has come for Parliament to, once again, consider legislation mandating that all eligible voters show up at their local polling station on election day, as has been the case in Australia since 1924. We say "once again" because, in 2005, former MP and Senator Mac Harb introduced a private Senator's bill in 2005 providing for a system of compulsory voting. It did not pass. One hour every four years to vote is not a price too high to pay for living in the best country in the world, as any political party would say.

Second, Liberal Party candidates attracted **one-third** of the votes cast across the country. This figure represents the lowest percentage of popular

record for the lowest popular vote, with 36 per cent in 1979. Critics of Canada's first-past-the-post electoral system have additional data to support their cause.

Looking Ahead

Prime Minister Trudeau has announced that his new Ministry will be sworn-in on November 20th. The one-month delay in naming his Cabinet was somewhat surprising, given that all but two of his previous Ministers were re-elected and some newly elected MPs had previously served as Ministers at the provincial government level. However, this delay can be explained by at least three factors:

- Minority governments are considerably different from majority governments. In a hung Parliament, the government must be ever-mindful of ensuring it has the confidence of the House of Commons (until, of course, it sees advantage to causing its own downfall and triggering an election). The first opportunity to test the confidence of the House is the government's Speech from the Throne. In a minority situation, the government will meet with one or more of the opposition parties and share Throne Speech language with them, ensuring that the initiatives will satisfy at least some of the needs of the opposition. Testing Throne Speech language is not necessary when holding a majority of the seats in the House. The Prime Minister's team will begin crafting its Speech from the Throne very soon, and needs time to meet with the opposition to ensure that its passage will be secured.
- The failure to win any seats in Alberta and Saskatchewan leaves a significant hole as the PM forms his Cabinet. He needs time to figure out how to get Cabinet representation from these two provinces. There are at least three ways to do this:
 - **Appoint a Senator to Cabinet:** While this is an option for Prime Minister Trudeau, it would at the very least be awkward for him, given that he expelled all Liberal Senators from his caucus years ago as part of his effort to reform the Senate without amending the Constitution. In these circumstances, it is unlikely that this would be his first choice.
 - **Floor Crossing:** The Liberals could approach the newly-elected NDP MP from Edmonton Strathcona, Heather McPherson, about crossing

legitimate option. We view the success of this approach to be as close to zero, even though Ms. McPherson ran more as a Rachel Notley NDP than a Jagmeet Singh NDP. Moreover, it would not resolve the problem of representation from Saskatchewan.

Nevertheless, it will no doubt be presented as an option to consider.

- ***Appoint a Non-elected Individual:*** It is not essential that a Cabinet Minister be drawn from the government's caucus. For example, in 1996, the Rt. Hon Jean Chretien named Stephane Dion and Pierre Pettigrew to Cabinet, even though neither was a sitting MP at the time of their appointment. In both cases, Prime Minister Chretien anticipated by-elections in which Mr. Dion and Mr. Pettigrew could run. This approach was also adopted by the Rt. Hon. Mackenzie King when he appointed his eventual successor, the Rt. Hon Louis St. Laurent to Cabinet prior to Mr. St. Laurent's election to the House.
- The Prime Minister needs time to get his own office in order. He will be seeking to ensure that his PMO staff includes individuals possessing experience in managing within the unique confines of a hung Parliament. Moreover, PMO staff will also be called upon to help prepare the Mandate Letters that will be provided to each member of Cabinet coincidental with being sworn-in.

With Cabinet announced on November 20th, the next key decision point for the Prime Minister will be when to call the new Parliament to sit. At the time of writing, this had not been announced. It is reasonable to anticipate, however, that the first session of the 43rd Parliament will commence before the holiday season, at least for a short period of time.

Once the first order of business is dealt with, the election of the Speaker of the House, the Throne Speech will be read and initial pieces of legislation will be introduced. Doing so prior to the holidays would demonstrate that the government is getting down to work quickly.

Did You Know That ...

... Canadians elected a record number of women — 98 — to serve in the House of Commons? This is wonderful news. But let's all resolve to do even better the next time.

... Cabinet Ministers serving at the dissolution of Parliament on September 11th continue in the job until the new Cabinet is sworn-in on November

In Closing

Minority governments are different beasts, but Canadians are used to them by now. As we noted in Volume IV, hung Parliaments can lead to impressive policy and legislative achievements. On the other hand, we can also expect much noisy political theatre. This includes speculation in the weeks and months ahead regarding the leadership of those party leaders perceived as not being as successful as they could, or should, have been.

It is our fervent hope that, despite political gamesmanship, the 43rd Parliament will get down to business quickly and demonstrate that our representatives in Ottawa can deal with the issues that are of greatest interest and concern to Canadians.



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