



Justin Trudeau canoeing on the Bow River in Calgary on the morning of the second leaders' debate. Adam Scotti photo.

Liberal Values Are Canadian Values

Martin Goldfarb

This wasn't just a "throw the bums out" election. As the dean of Canadian pollsters who made his reputation taking the pulse of Canadians for Justin Trudeau's father, Marty Goldfarb knows a lot about Canadian values. For nearly a decade, Stephen Harper made our national conversation about boutique tax breaks, systematically violating the Charter of Rights and, finally, snitching on your neighbour. Justin Trudeau promised a return to the traditional Canadian values of economic equality, inclusivity and optimism.

Justin Trudeau was elected with traditional Liberal values driving his choices and the historical Liberal coalition of voters and regions of the country rallying to his message.

Historically, Liberals won elections when Quebec and Ontario were on the same page. Liberals won elections when they won at least half the seats in Atlantic Canada and Quebec and two-thirds of the seats in Ontario. When this happens, they form the national government. Nothing is new about this. And, it is exactly what happened in 2015. The traditional Liberal coalition came together again, attracted by Liberal values.

In the 2011 election, many in Quebec voted for the NDP as a protest against Stephen Harper while deserting the Bloc Québécois, but they were never truly NDPers. In 2015, Quebecers realized that voting for the NDP left them out of the decision-making in Ottawa, and Quebec wanted to be part of national decision-making—not relegated to the fringe. When people in Quebec realized—halfway through the election—that the NDP was not gaining strength in English Canada, they began to swing away and switch, especially in urban areas, to the Liberals.

This is the real reason that NDP support collapsed in Quebec. Their support of a woman's right to wear a niqab is a red herring. After all, Tom Mulcair and Justin Trudeau took the same stance on this issue.

Quebecers wanted both a change of government, as well as to be part of the new government. When Quebec and Ontario come together they form an axis that controls who gets elected to form the federal government. This is the nexus of the Liberal federal strength in Canada and one that Brian Mulroney used as a model for his victories. For a time, under Mulroney, a fluently bilingual Quebecer himself, Quebecers connected with the Progressive Conservatives. Mulroney also won a large portion of Ontario as a Progressive Conservative. However, Progressive Conservatives are not the Harper Conservatives. Their values are not that different than historic Liberal values.

Quebec today has a Liberal mayor in Montreal and a Liberal provincial government, which has reached out to the Liberal government in Ontario. These two provincial Liberal governments have similar values that drive the choices they make.

Canadians' collective values have not changed. The Liberal brand continues to resonate with Canadians. The public may have been uncomfortable with Michael Ignatieff and Stéphane Dion but they never completely gave up

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on the Liberal Party. The Liberal brand never died. It was an embarrassment for a short period of time under these leaders but Liberal roots and Liberal values endured. The party never changed its colours, its symbols or its name. The historical connection of Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party to the past is clear.

Justin Trudeau reintroduced Canadians to those values: trust, tolerance, transparency, peace, justice, prosperity, opportunity, fiscal responsibility, social justice and economic nationalism. These are historical. It is these values that drove the decisions that Trudeau made during the campaign, for instance:

- Announcing that Canada would accept 25,000 Syrian refugees
- Stating that wearing the niqab is a women's right
- Supporting funding of the CBC
- Helping students finance their education
- Announcing that CPP would start again at 65, not 67
- Doubling infrastructure spending
- Committing to build more navy ships in Canada

These are decisions driven by Liberal values—values that drove Pierre Elliott Trudeau's decision making, that drove Paul Martin's decision making and drove Jean Chrétien's decision making. They appeal to traditional Liberal voters, the young, those over 65 and new Canadians. Whether you look at the results of the election by gender, by income, or by ethnicity in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic

Canada, all of these people were united in voting Liberal.

Above all, these values are exemplified in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canadians love the Charter, despite Harper's concerted efforts over the past 10 years to diminish the Charter both in the courts and as an element of our national narrative.

Canadians were uncomfortable with these Harper policies:

- being a snitch society;
- discriminating against any one group;
- excessive interest in security—especially at the expense of personal freedom;
- attacking the Supreme Court and the Charter.

Canadians experimented with the Harper Conservatives for 10 years and then decided they could not live with those values. This is not about the natural fatigue with a government after 10 years. Canadians decided Harper Conservative values do not reflect what they think of as the Canadian way. On October 19, Canadians rejected: building more prisons; thinking there is a terrorist on every corner; expanding the security state; rejecting science as a decision-making tool and muzzling government research professionals; expanding CSIS; and taking citizenship away from dual citizens who have committed certain crimes.

Liberals see a benefit to government. Liberals do not see government as the enemy of the people. Liberals see

government as a force for the good of the collective. Liberals spend for the good of society. Harper's end goal was to reduce government with a fundamental belief that expenditures are evil. Harper tried to shift Canadian values and he failed.

This election attracted 68 per cent of the population to vote, up from 61 per cent in 2001, and 58 per cent in 2008—a return to levels not seen in more than 20 years. Because this was an election about values rather than specific policies, more Canadians came out to vote again.

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A brand is a promise you make consistently over time. Liberal values drive the Liberal brand promise and

this promise under Justin Trudeau is *Better is Always Possible*. This exemplifies the Canadian dream.

What Harper did not display was the ethic of responsible citizenship and that is what the Liberal brand has stood for in the past and continues to stand for today. Conservatives will need to rethink their values. **P**

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**ELECTION
2015**



A Policy/iPolitics Working Lunch

The Rideau Club
99 Bank Street 15th Floor
Wednesday, November 18, 2015
12 – 2 PM

Policy Editor L. Ian MacDonald in conversation with:

Catherine Cano, Director of News, Radio-Canada

Susan Delacourt, Author of the bestselling *Shopping for Votes* and columnist for the *Toronto Star* and *iPolitics*

Don Newman, Chairman Canada 2020 and columnist for *Policy*

Audience Q&A will follow

Emcee: **James Baxter**, Editor, *iPolitics*

Tables of 8 @ \$1,000

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