



Hill+Knowlton
Strategies

2019 Federal Election: Research Canada Briefing

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Overview

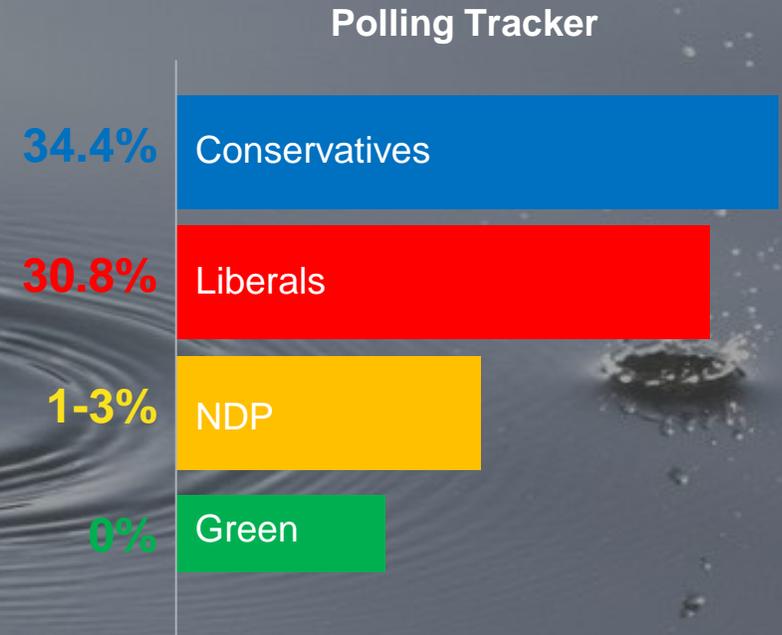
- The 43rd Canadian Federal Election will take place this October.
- While the governing Liberals enjoyed an extended ‘honeymoon’ period after their 2015 majority mandate, the tone has shifted and so has public support for the government, creating an unpredictable electoral landscape.
- Regional divides, including a challenging provincial landscape, will see tense political fights in several regions. Each party view B.C., Ontario and Quebec as crucial battlegrounds.
- While pharmacare is poised to dominate the healthcare debate, with a focus on cost and access, there is an opportunity to raise other health policy issues, including health research. All three major parties are considering a range of commitments on other health policy issues.

Timeline

- In **late June** the federal government will go into ‘caretaker’ mode. The Privy Council Office has clear guidelines for what government can and cannot do during that period, which will extend until after the election – no new funding, no new programs or policy changes.
- Ongoing legislation could force the government to remain in Ottawa beyond their regularly scheduled sitting, and potentially into **July**.
- The writ will likely be dropped in **September**. The Prime Minister could trigger the campaign sooner, potentially in **August** and extend the writ period. Election day is **October 21st, 2019**.
- Cabinet sworn in and Speech from the Throne in **November or December, 2019**.
- Pre-budget process likely to kick off **early 2020**.

Shifting Landscape

- Rolling polls show high levels of movement between parties.
- Recent estimates suggest up to 8 million voters remain uncommitted.
- The target 18 – 25 demographic will continue to have outsized impact – just as they did in 2015.
- The rise of third parties could heavily influence the outcome. Greens (10.7%), BQ (4.1%) and People’s Party (2.1%) are positioned to hurt larger party totals in swing ridings and could sway seat breakdowns.
- A shifting political landscape creates uncertainty. The most likely outcome – 60% likelihood per CBC poll tracking – is a minority.



Platforms

Party platform development is in the final stages.

Platforms will be rolled out over the course of the coming months and will focus on key issues to each party:

- **Liberal** – Reducing the burden on the middle class, pharmacare, job creation, climate change, infrastructure, seniors, gender equality, rural connectivity, affordable housing.
- **Conservative** – Reducing taxes, balanced budget, carbon tax, energy project approvals, ethics, immigration and secure borders.
- **NDP** – Social inequality, electoral reform, pharmacare, corporate tax increases, climate change, affordable housing.

Political Considerations

- **Provincial landscape** – When the Liberals formed government in 2015, Premiers across the country were much more aligned with the federal Liberal platform. Alliances between premiers across provinces (Ford in Ontario and Kenney in Alberta) will create a challenging dynamic for the Liberals. Those high-profile voices could also frustrate the federal Conservatives and bring national attention to issues the party is not seeking to amplify throughout the campaign.
- **Quebec & Atlantic Canada** – The Liberals swept Atlantic Canada in 2015 – a feat they are not likely to repeat. Two provinces (New Brunswick and PEI) have since elected right-leaning governments. The Conservatives and Liberals have both sought to make inroads in Quebec, where the NDP have faltered.
- **Ethics** – Since the Liberals formed government, Opposition parties have taken aim at what they see as ethical concerns, including Liberal Party fundraisers, the Prime Minister’s relationship with outside organizations and the recent SNC Lavalin controversy.
- **Natural Resources** – The Trans Mountain Pipeline will continue to divide western provinces, and put the Liberals in a bind as they seek to retain support in British Columbia, while also standing up for a project they purchased – and which is popular in other parts of the country.
- **Extremism** – The Liberals have sought to paint the Conservatives as closely aligned to or failing to condemn the alt-right and other far right commentators. That dynamic, which focuses largely on cultural and immigration issues is likely to continue during the campaign, contributing to a tense political environment.



Ballot Box Issues: The Three “E’s”

- Economy - affordability/cost of living issues
- Energy – pipelines and carbon tax
- Environment – climate change

Health Policy

- **Pharmacare** is positioned to take up much of the oxygen for healthcare debate.
- **Cost** will drive the debate on pharmacare. The Conservatives are expected to introduce an alternative pharma plan as a counter to the Liberal and NDP plans. The Conservatives recently signaled a five year return to budget timeline, which would allow for an investment in the program.
- **Seniors** are on the radar for all three major parties. The youth-focused Liberal government created a ministerial post for seniors late in its mandate, and other parties are targeting what they view as a vulnerability. The Conservatives are considering initiatives to address seniors' homelessness and support services is a platform focus for the Liberals.
- **Indigenous** health services are a focus for the Liberals and NDP. The Liberals have invested massive figures in social services and healthcare for rural and remote communities, as well as Indigenous communities in urban centres.
- **Access to healthcare** is a focus for all parties. The Liberals appointed a rural minister partway through their mandate and are identifying potential commitments to rural health access. The rural component of the Liberal platform is not yet finalized.
- **Mental health** investment is poised to be a Liberal platform commitment. The Liberal-lead health committee recently completed a study on farmers' mental health.
- **Cuts to health spending** in Ontario are being watched closely by the Liberals, who are eyeing a commitment to make up the gap. The party views the issue as a potential wedge between Andrew Scheer and Premier Ford.

Health Research

- Not a ballot box question, but raising the issues sensitizes new MP's, new government
- Tie health research to improving health outcomes and supporting evidence-based decision making in health
- Ontario cuts to health research is an opportunity with the Liberals
- Meet with Liberal and Conservative candidates but don't overlook the NDP and Greens – they may have balance of power
- Chief Science Advisor is an important ally

After the Election

- Tell your story – health research makes Canada healthier and wealthier
- Marshall the evidence – what has the increase in funding meant to the community – and Canadians?
- Identify your champions and mobilize them as early as possible
- For Liberals, build on the narrative and momentum of 2018; “Health research is the foundation of evidence-based decision making; investing in young researchers is an investment in the next generation of discovery”
- For Conservatives, stress health research as non-partisan issue, the ability to solve major health crises in Canada – dementia, opioids, chronic diseases. “More money isn’t the answer, better evidence is”

Questions?

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