



CANADA VOTES

ELECTION DAY

June 28, 2004

Main

The Campaign
Candidates & Ridings
Leaders & Parties
Political Canada
Analysis & Commentary
Making it Count
Opinion Polls
Voter Toolkit
Daily Answer
Your View
Radio & TV Coverage
News Archive



[Main](#) » [Analysis & Commentary](#) » [Today's Papers](#)

Analysis & Commentary

Today's Papers

By **Peter Kavanagh**

June 18, 2004:
Final Edition



Peter Kavanagh

In the News

Ten days before the country goes to the polls, and the election campaign and today's papers are both dominated by polls, party strategies and health care.

"Fresh Onslaught on Tories" (St. John's Telegram), "Harper, Klein will Strip Medicare: PM" (Ottawa Citizen), "Martin Vows to Defend Medicare" (Halifax Chronicle Herald), "Liberals Target Klein, Mulroney" (Globe and Mail) "Klein Threat to Medicare: PM" (Edmonton Journal) were the headlines on some of the papers this morning.

The Liberal party has been quick to pick up on Alberta Premier Ralph Klein's announcement that he would wait until June 30 -- two days after the federal election -- to announce details of changes to Alberta's health-care system. Klein has acknowledged that the planned changes may violate Canada's medicare law. Liberal Leader Paul Martin and his strategists suggested that waiting until after the election was partly to keep the Conservative party's "vision" hidden, and partly in the hope, as Martin said in Chatham Ont., yesterday that Klein will "have a silent partner in Ottawa by the name of Stephen Harper. Someone who will not speak up for the Canada Health Act."

Klein called Martin's comments "mud-slinging," the Alberta health minister called them "desperate and paranoid" and Conservative Leader Stephen Harper accused the Martin of showing an "anti-Western bias." The Calgary Herald would appear to lean towards the perspective of Klein and Harper: "PM Calls Alberta Tories

A Look Back



Governing by minority [more »](#)

Campaign Watch



36 Days- A new political view every day. [more »](#)



A view on the election from Dennis Trudeau. [more »](#)



Keep track of the campaign with Olga Safroshkina. [more »](#)

Sign-Up for Newsletters



Become a smarter news consumer with our **Spin Cycle** newsletter. [more »](#)



Get **Today's Papers** in your e-mail every day. [more »](#)

a Threat."

The Montreal Gazette's front-page headline ("It's a Toss-Up"), the Regina Leader-Post's ("Still a Tight Race: Polls"), the National Post's ("Tories and Liberals Stuck in Dead Heat") and the Winnipeg Free Press's "It's A Dead Heat: Polls" capture the sense of the second big story in today's papers -- the polls. The latest COMPAS Poll, done for the CanWest chain in English Canada and the Leger Poll of Quebec done for the Gazette, put the race between the Liberals and the Conservatives at a tie. Compass has the Liberals at 35 per cent, the Conservatives at 34 per cent and the NDP at 17 per cent. Leger has 42 per cent voting Bloc Québécois, 27 per cent voting Liberal, 11 per cent voting Conservative and five per cent voting New Democrat.

The Ottawa Citizen's front page trumpets "Martin's Man Cries Sabotage," which brings in the complications in the polling story. Yesterday, the CanWest chain of papers reported on a leaked Pollara poll that purported to show the Conservatives leaping ahead of the Liberals, 36 per cent to 31 per cent, and heading for a strong minority government. Liberal campaign co-chair David Herle denounced the poll and released the details of some internal polling done by his party that shows the Liberals heading to a minority government with a two-point lead over the Conservatives.

The Ottawa Sun reports on the latest CPAC/SES tracking poll, which shows the Liberals and Conservatives tied at 32 per cent and the NDP at 21 per cent. The Sun headline, "Some Western Voters Would Say 'Oui' to Bloc: Poll" captures the oddest thing about the new CPAC poll. Pollster Nik Nanos said, "We've done 25 days of tracking and we couldn't find one Canadian west of Quebec who would vote for the Bloc. In the last two nights we found a number of them in Western Canada. It's a blip."

The Bloc played a key role in the evolving strategies of the Liberal and Conservative election campaigns. The Edmonton Journal's "Harper Just Says 'Non' to Coalition" and the Ottawa Citizen and Calgary Herald's "No Crazy Alliance with Bloc: Harper" describes the message the Conservative leader took to Quebec on his campaign swing through the province. The Toronto Star captures the Conservative leader's mission as "Harper Heads for the Hills of Martin Country in Quebec." Stephen Harper has repeatedly said Quebecers need an option other than the Bloc or the Liberals and he is hoping the Conservatives can make a breakthrough.

At the same time, Sean Gordon, writing in the Ottawa Citizen ("Top Tories Seek to Muffle Talk of Majority"), reports on the concerns of Conservative insiders that some people on the campaign are getting cocky and "mistaking Liberal disaffection for affection for us." The fear is that the party will appear arrogant, when the reality is that the election could still swing either way.

The evolving Liberal strategy saw the release of new commercials by the party last night. In the Globe and Mail story "Liberals Target Klein, Mulroney," Drew Fagan describes the new television spots and the use of former prime minister Brian Mulroney and former Ontario premier Mike Harris as a code for scaring voters considering voting Conservative. The Toronto Star, "Harper Touts Mulroney, Harris" describes an Ontario campaign stop in North Bay yesterday by the Conservative leader where he praised Mulroney and Harris, saying that "Canada was better off under their stewardship."

The Vancouver Sun reports that NDP Leader Jack Layton's strategy has shifted somewhat from the days when the Liberals and Conservatives were the same: "Layton Warns Harper 'Worse' than Liberals." At a rally yesterday, the Sun reports, Layton didn't stop attacking the Liberals, but he was more critical of the Conservatives. The Toronto Star reports that at a rally in Qualicum Beach, B.C., Layton claimed the NDP was the only party that voters could trust when it came to the environment ("Layton Pushes 'Green' Agenda").

Analysis and commentary

John Ibbitson in his Globe and Mail column ("Liberals' Need to Win Outweighs All") writes that Paul Martin's attack on Ralph Klein yesterday was evidence that the Liberals are hoping the Alberta premier can be to Stephen Harper what Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has been to the federal Liberal party. Ibbitson sees a note of desperation in the move. He argues that Martin, in a bid to win the crucial seats in "Battleground Ontario," is willing to play to Ontario's worst fears of Westerners, Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois. All that matters is assuring the Conservatives don't get a minority government, then reveal all the Liberal dirty laundry and win a subsequent massive majority based on the record of Liberal mismanagement. "To prevent that, anything is fair game. Stitching up the wounds to the federation can wait. Southern Ontario has to be won."

Don Martin, the Calgary Herald and CanWest columnist, tackles Martin's attacks on Klein and Harper on health care in the column "PM Accuses Alberta of Health-Care Conspiracy." Similar to Ibbitson, Don Martin argues, "When you're down, drowning and desperate in Ontario, it's time for all good Liberals to haul out the Alberta bogeyman."

The Toronto Star's editorial this morning tackles Stephen Harper's calculations about the Conservative platform: "Take a Close Look at Harper's Budget." The Star writes that the numbers behind the Harper budget are one of the most controversial aspects to this election campaign, with Paul Martin talking about a \$50-billion hole and "many top economists, some with deep conservative ties, are dismissing Harper's platform as financially unworkable." The Star thinks voters need to understand that the budget means big cuts in "everything from food

inspections to federal prisons and Canada's space program."

Sounding out Senate reform

Don MacDonald in the Halifax Chronicle Herald ("Shaking Up the Senate, Canvassing a Cabinet") looks at Stephen Harper's plan for an incremental reform of the Senate, which got a boost yesterday from New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord, and explores why many Nova Scotians are anxious for a discussion of a new design for the Senate.

The Globe and Mail editorial "The Folly of Rushing into Senate Elections" makes the argument that the Senate "as it stands is ripe for abolition," but that in reality this demands constitutional reform not the incremental change currently contemplated by the Conservative platform. The Globe says there are real legal and philosophical grounds for changing the institution thoroughly and constitutionally. The Conservative plan may resonate with Canadians but it is not the best way to go.

The National Post ("Two Es Are Better than None") argues that the incremental Senate reforms planned by the Conservatives and endorsed by Bernard Lord are good first steps. The Post argues that the Senate plays an important constitutional role in Canada and needs to be made more modern and more relevant. While fixing the institution is the ultimate goal, the Post would like to see the task started.

"Harper's Proposal for Senate is Facile," a column by Susan Riley in the Ottawa Citizen, criticizes the Conservative plan for Senate reform as out of touch with the political and constitutional realities of the country. Riley argues you can't really reform the senate without opening up the Constitution and she observes that veterans of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accord know what a nightmare that is. She goes on in her column to examine the number of flaws she sees in Harper's proposal and ultimately concludes it isn't grounded in the hard realities of Canadian political life. This issue hardly trumps health care or fiscal accountability on the hustings. But the closer Harper comes to power, the more closely his rivals should examine what looks like a facile proposal.

Previous Today's Papers

Peter Kavanagh is a senior producer in CBC Radio Current Affairs, and is a journalist of 20 years standing with an obsessive love of the printed word.

You can subscribe to Peter's column and have each new edition e-mailed to you.

- If you're already a member of MyCBC, here's where you can [sign up](#) for it.
- If you're not a member, you can [become one here](#).

If you'd like to get more information on one of the stories or newspapers that Peter mentions, here's a list of his daily reading material!

National News Links

- [The Globe and Mail](#)
- [The National Post](#)
- [Canada.com](#)
- [Canoe.ca](#)

Eastern Canada and Quebec

- [The Telegram, St. John's](#)
- [The Chronicle Herald, Halifax](#)
- [The Guardian, P.E.I.](#)
- [Montreal Gazette](#)

Ontario

- [Ottawa Citizen](#)
- [Ottawa Sun](#)
- [Toronto Star](#)
- [Toronto Sun](#)

The West

- [Calgary Herald](#)
- [Edmonton Journal](#)
- [Leader-Post, Regina](#)

British Columbia

- [Vancouver Sun](#)
- [The Province, Vancouver](#)

CBC does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of external sites. Links will open in new window.

[^ BACK TO TOP](#)