

# Rae tells Liberals his leadership will stifle NDP

**BILL CURRY**  
FROM MONDAY'S GLOBE AND MAIL

OTTAWA — Bob Rae says he can position the Liberals as the best option to take on Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives because his leadership will squeeze out the NDP.




With only two weeks of campaigning left before delegates begin arriving in Montreal for the federal Liberals' leadership convention, Mr. Rae is seizing on a new poll that shows he could swing New Democratic Party voters into the Liberal camp.

Canadians are “looking for a new leader who in fact could move the Liberal Party forward and clearly establish the Liberal Party as the alternative to Mr. Harper, which is the key to what we need to do to form a government,” Mr. Rae said yesterday in an interview with CBC Newsworld.

An SES Research survey published in the Sun newspapers yesterday showed that 29.6 per cent of people who voted NDP in the last election are more likely to vote Liberal if Mr. Rae leads the party.

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However, 22.2 per cent of NDP voters said they would be less likely to consider the Liberals should Mr. Rae win.

Over all, the survey found that none of the four front-runners in the race — including Mr. Rae, Michael Ignatieff, Stéphane Dion and Gerard Kennedy — will draw a large number of voters away from other parties.

Mr. Rae nonetheless seized on the SES survey, as well as other favourable surveys, as evidence that he has the best chance of defeating the Conservatives.

The former Ontario NDP premier listed issues he would raise in an election campaign, including climate change, Afghanistan and managing the economy.

“Those are all areas where Mr. Harper is out of touch, out of sync with where the people are, and where the Liberal Party is in sync,” he said. “And where, frankly, the NDP just isn't there because they're not able to form a government and they're just caught up either in this negativity which has taken over the party, or propping up Mr. Harper.

“And we don't [think] those are going to be good strategies for the NDP, and the Liberals have to be there to replace Mr. Harper's government.”

Mr. Rae said his comments were not an attack on Mr. Ignatieff, the first-ballot front-runner.

“It’s about the Liberal Party choosing a leader who they think is going to be best able to beat Mr. Harper and who the Liberal Party believes is best able to expand the base of the party,” he said.

NDP spokesman Brad Lavigne dismissed Mr. Rae’s remarks, saying the Liberals have a poor record on the issues Mr. Rae mentioned, such as climate change and Afghanistan.


“The argument is laughable,” Mr. Lavigne said. “He needs to get a reality check on the crowd he’s now running with.”

Ian Davey, the national director of Mr. Ignatieff’s campaign, countered that while the NDP vote is usually constant at about 17 per cent, Mr. Ignatieff can win over centrist voters, who are in the majority.

“The key vote to be looking for is the vote in the middle,” he said. “Michael’s pulling from the Bloc, the Greens and the Conservatives. If you take him at his word, Bob’s pulling from 17 per cent of the popular vote.”

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Scott Brison

Born: May 10, 1967, Windsor, N.S.

Personal: Single, in a relationship with partner Maxime St-Pierre.

Political history: Elected to Parliament as a Progressive Conservative in the Nova Scotia riding of Kings-Hants in 1997. Ran for PC leadership, finishing fourth in 2003. Left the

View Supporting Liberal MP's: 4 TOTAL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84
85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96
97	98	99	100	101	102						

= Undecided/Neutral

With time running out before the convention, there is little evidence that the party is approaching a consensus as to how to diffuse debate over a controversial motion to declare Quebec a nation.


Quebec Premier Jean Charest waded into the debate on the weekend, telling reporters Saturday that Quebec will be a nation regardless of what others have to say.

“For us, Quebec is a nation,” he said, following a meeting of Quebec Liberals. “There has never been any doubt in my mind. And by the way, neither do I believe that Quebecers have any permission to ask from anyone to be who they are. Period.”

Earlier this month, Quebec Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Benoît Pelletier told the National Assembly that talks to recognize Quebec as a nation in the Constitution are “inevitable.”

Meanwhile, the Liberal Party’s decision to schedule U.S. Democratic National Committee chairman Howard Dean — who failed in his bid to become the Democratic presidential nominee in 2004 — as keynote speaker at the leadership convention continues to attract negative comments from some Liberals. *With a report from Canadian Press*

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