



Oh, Canada!

Yesterday Canadians went to the polls and resoundingly turned their backs on nine years of Conservative rule led by Stephen Harper, the Alberta conservative whose attempt to wean Canada away from her addiction to Big Government socialism has failed spectacularly. Harper, known in the United States for his chilly relationship with Barack Obama and his persistent efforts to persuade the White House to authorize the Keystone Pipeline to ship crude oil from the Alberta tar sands to American refineries, steered Canada through the Great Recession with sounder fiscal policymaking than other leaders in the Western world. As a result, Canada was the only major industrialized country to weather the Great Recession largely intact. While America stagnated, Canada enjoyed significant economic growth. Harper also succeeded in ridding Canada of the hated Long Gun Registry, an attempt by the Canadian government to register all privately-owned firearms that was met with widespread non-compliance. Harper was a fiscal conservative who championed smaller government and lower taxes, to the consternation of Canada's liberal socialist establishment. Harper was also an unapologetic friend and ally of Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposed the Obama nuclear deal with Iran.



But on October 19, Canadians turned back to their leftist preferences by electing a large Liberal majority to Parliament, ushering in the era of Justin Trudeau (shown). Trudeau, an enthusiastic proponent of cannabis use and son of the late Pierre Trudeau, the Liberal prime minister of Canada during most of the late '60s, '70s, and early '80s. Despite warnings from Canada's Conservatives that Trudeau is too young and callow to be prime minister, the cachet of the family name proved irresistible.

The electoral math proved impossible to overcome for Harper. Canadians, in a funk because of a mild recession earlier this year, turned out en masse to throw the alleged bums out. All of Atlantic Canada, most of Quebec and Ontario, and all of Canada's far north elected Liberal MPs, with Conservatives carrying the day only in Alberta (Canada's freest province) and portions of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia.



Written by [Charles Scaliger](#) on October 20, 2015

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Stephen Harper is presumably inconsolable. As noted by the AP's [Rob Gillies](#):

Former colleagues of Harper said he would be personally devastated to lose to a Trudeau, the liberal legacy he entered politics to destroy. Harper's long-term goal was to kill the widely entrenched notion that the Liberals — the party of Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chretien — are the natural party of government in Canada, and to redefine what it means to be Canadian.

To an even greater extent than the United States, Canada has an electoral east-west divide, with the urban eastern portions of the country — like the urban northeast and Midwest in the United States — preferring Big Government socialism over its opposite, and the prairie and western provinces, particularly Alberta, consistently preferring less government and lower taxes. Alberta even has a pro-secession party, the Wild Rose Party, that wants to cut ties with big-spending Ottawa altogether, and has enjoyed considerable popularity in the provincial government.

Harper himself is from Alberta, and, although he won reelection to his Parliamentary seat yesterday, had promised to resign from office if Conservatives lost.

Justin Trudeau has already promised steep tax hikes on Canada's wealthy, and also intends to run large deficits during his first three years in office, signaling a return to the era of tax-and-spend Big Government that Harper tried to end. He has every intention of continuing the socialist legacy of Canadian prime ministers past, including his revered father.

With such prospects, it is difficult to see how Canada's recent progress can be sustained. Canadians, no less than Americans, are easily swayed by personality and panache, and no less prone to Gadarene rushes over electoral cliffs — if the allure of sweet-sounding but irrational campaign promises coupled with youthful appeal is strong enough.

Photo of Justin Trudeau: AP Images



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