

This World Of Ours

By Bob Harwood

bharwoodb@hotmail.com

My Vision For Canada



Canada's fourth election in seven years transformed the political landscape. Conservatives won 54% of the seats to form a majority. New Democrats won 33% and Liberals plummeted to less than 19%. The Bloc Quebecois fell from 40 to just 4 seats and the Greens finally won a seat. But in popular vote terms Conservatives were under 40% only 9% ahead of the NDP. Voters voiced their angst with constant elections and an uncivil, multi-party parliament.

Canada has been an oasis of stability with its well-regulated economy and strong demand for its resources. While a more stable government is a positive, Prime Minister Harper must proceed with care. *The Economist* in a May issue before election results were known labeled Harper "*the least bad option*

" giving him credit for sound fiscal management but noting the major roles of the surplus and

strong regulatory regime he inherited from the Liberals. The new government has key issues that I, and the Economist, feel must be addressed.

Parliamentary reform. The Economist's biggest concern was Harper's "*contempt for the rules of Canadian democracy as he twice prorogued parliament to avoid questions about officials lying to the House, getting rid of watchdogs his government found too independent and handing over as little information as possible to the public.*"

Harper must collaborate respectfully with opposition parties who, after all, won 60% of the votes. He must pursue not just his own rightist agenda but one that also addresses the priorities of the moderate majority of Canadians.

Climate change. I deem slowing climate change the most critical issue of our time. And action is frustrated by what Britain's Gordon Brown called "*the mismatch between timing of environmental and electoral impact*"

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The
Economist

noted that "

Harper has been a dinosaur on climate change."

He reneged on Canada's formal Kyoto endorsement to stay in step with America and shield tar sands oil in his political base. North America's per capita emissions are now roughly twice those of European countries. Canada and America must join the rest of the world in slowing climate change. Only from that moral base can we encourage emerging powers to do their part. And emissions must be measured

per capita

, not

per country,

to reflect vast differences in populations.

International leadership. In recent years Canada abandoned its traditional peace keeping and foreign aid roles. One-sided support of Israel ignored the plight of Palestinians. The recent reunification of Palestinian factions raise world hopes for finally resolving the Israel / Palestinian conflict at the root of terrorism. Canada was downgraded on Amnesty International's ratings on human rights and for the first time lost its bid for a rotating seat on the UN Security Council. I recall when Mike Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize for averting the Suez crisis, when Lloyd Axworthy led in creating the International Court of Justice and the banning of land mines, when John Bethune's still revered work in China set the stage for Doctors Without Borders, when Stephen Lewis led the battle against AIDS, when Maurice Strong was the UN's point man in addressing climate change leading up to Kyoto. I take pride in Canada's cultural mosaic model blending from immigration to integration and mirroring my world as a whole.

To claim its future Canada must reclaim its past.