

# Canada's 40<sup>th</sup> General Election: results, implications and predictions



Conservative Party of Canada	Liberal Party of Canada	Bloc Quebecois	New Democratic Party of Canada	Green Party
2006 – 124 seats	103	51	29	0
2008 – 143 seats	76	50	37	0

### Minority Government

Generally, Canada is now in the same place politically we were before the 40<sup>th</sup> General Election. The Conservatives won 16 new seats and the Liberals lost 19 seats. In calculating the balance of power, 155 seats are required to hold a majority – it is widely expected the Conservatives will attempt to run the House of Commons much like in the last session of Parliament –like a de facto majority. However, the reality remains that minority status means legislative progress will be slow and some co-operation amongst the parties will be necessary. Nationally, 37.6% of Canadians voted for the Conservatives, 26% for the Liberals and 18% voted for the NDP. The Bloc received 10% of the vote and Greens 6.8%.

Voter turnout is at an all time national low with only 59.1% of registered electors casting a ballot (13.8MM of 23.4MM, unofficial results). This election witnessed the lowest voter participation in Canadian history (excluding a referendum held in 1898 which resulted in 44% turnout). Regionally, 5.1 MM Ontarians out of 8.7MM cast a ballot, 1.2 of 2.4 MM Albertans voted and 62% of Quebecers participated. This is not a good thing for our democracy.

### Implications

The 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament will bring continued partisan deadlock in the House of Commons in terms of major legislative and policy direction. However, the minority is “stronger” than in the 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament and has now received a fresh mandate from voters. The Conservatives will govern like a majority with continued confidence motions on most pieces of legislation and generally the House will be obliged to adopt most legislative initiatives to avoid another election. Federal-Provincial relationships will most likely continue to stagnate as the federal Government focuses on political survival. Interesting for the construction industry is the continued devolution of power and funding responsibilities regarding training and labour market issues to provincial governments. **This is an opportunity to leverage opportunities with industry partners and provincial governments.**

Canada’s most populous cities are basically shut out of government as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver or Ottawa did not elect a conservative MP within any of the respective city limits and are relegated to the opposition parties. This could pose a challenge to

required co-operation on infrastructure investments and the construction industry. Calgary and Edmonton are now two of the few Canadian cities with major influence in government. Rural Canadians overwhelmingly voted Conservative as did Western Canadians. Of note in Atlantic Canada, Prince Edward Island will get a Cabinet seat with a slim victory for Gail Shea and the Conservatives.

The coming legislative session will be a challenging time for our trades – the Conservatives will continue to evaluate the usefulness of national skills development programs and pieces of legislation like the Federal Fair Wage Policy, Canada Labour Code and others. The campaign however did highlight how the Conservatives plan to assist apprentices complete their program in our industry – we welcome the tangible, monetary support for our apprentices.

**Labour mobility is going to be a major issue for our organizations in the coming year** – the recent announcement on the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) pledges to increase and enable mobility nationwide. The Conservatives propped up the AIT as a major plank in their platform - **our trades need to be unified in support for the existing Interprovincial Red Seal Program while working with government on the implications of AIT for our industry.** Replacing an ageing workforce in this change oriented environment means extra effort will be required. Working on AIT and our labour market requirements while our industry is busier than it has ever been and maintaining standards, transferring skill and knowledge will present a challenge.

*Regional Voting Patterns means regional divides will remain*

- 65% of Albertans voted Conservative, 11% Liberal and 12% NDP
- 39% of Ontarians voted Conservative, 33% Liberal and 18% NDP
- 44% of British Columbians voted Conservative, 26% NDP and 19% Liberal
- 38% of Quebecers voted Bloc, Liberal 23% and 22% Conservative
- No one party can claim to be truly ‘national’ in the new Parliament

*Pundit Predictions*

- The 40<sup>th</sup> Parliament will last approximately 18 months
- Leaders from all political parties will be facing internal reviews from their respective membership as all failed to deliver overarching party objectives (Harper, Dion and Layton)
- The Liberal Party will select a new leader within 6 months
- There is a good chance to move the agenda of the Building & Construction Trades forward