

OPINION

POLITICS & MEDIA



Photographs by Jake Wright, The Hill Times

Trudeau's got a ticket to ride: The media are dismissing NDP Leader Tom Mulcair's potential to govern and are giving Grit Leader Justin Trudeau a free ride, argues Darcey Dupuis.

What's up with national media's free ride for Trudeau?



BY DARCEY DUPUIS

GARSON, ONT.—In an era of increasing dissatisfaction within the political realm of voters versus politicians, it appears that over the last two decades, the Canadian political climate has soured beyond control.

How can we, as a society, re-establish the link once held proudly by every eligible voter in this country?

Among his dying words, the late Jack Layton used three specific words that he wanted Canadians to use in order to empower themselves and those around them to make positive changes in the political arena: love, hope and optimism.

Unfortunately, since then, anything but that has happened in the realm of politics. One of the problems with establishing

real hope and optimism for Canadians is that our political reality appears to be more convoluted than ever by increasingly vociferous opinion pieces in journalism.

Sadly, these commentaries are contributing to the growing disparity in understanding what our political leaders or their parties actually represent. How can we, as Canadians, change this to our benefit?

I was in Ottawa on the evening of May 2, 2011, as the results of the 42nd Canadian general election were being announced nationwide.

That election proved to a groundbreaking year in politics for all of the political parties. The Conservatives won their first majority, Elizabeth May won the first seat for the Greens, the Liberals and Bloc Québécois lost a record amount of seats while the NDP won a record number of them.

Despite the fact that the NDP won enough seats to become the official opposition, the party seemed to lean on the side of caution.

Everybody knew within the party's membership that the next four years would prove to be difficult. Being recognized as the "third party" for 50 years, many knew the party wouldn't get a free ride from the media. Often dismissed as irrelevant prior to the election, media scrutiny would have automatically shifted towards the question "Is the NDP really ready to govern next?" had it not been for the untimely death of its leader.

Fast forward to today.

Not surprising, several months after the leadership race that heralded Justin Trudeau as the leader of the Liberal Party, the media are already

dismissing the NDP's potential to govern. As a result, some Canadians have become increasingly dismayed by the lack of media scrutiny Trudeau is receiving.

In comparison, shortly after Thomas Mulcair replaced Nycole Turmel as leader of the NDP, it seemed as though the media were ready to pounce on every mistake he made.

A conversation with CBC's Evan Solomon on sustainable development resulted in a six-month battle with media commentaries often twisting every word Mulcair said just to discredit him. Similarly, for the past decade, the media have focused on Stephen Harper's negative policies, but rarely on his positive ones. Then, of course, there is the Bloc Québécois; not much to say there, they've been ignored completely. Yet, when the new leader of the Liberal Party is chosen, he is faced with next to nothing in terms of scrutiny. Why is this?

How can Canadians form their own opinion on leaders who refuse to release or discuss policies with the mainstream media? More specifically, how can the media continue to report on Justin Trudeau, in some cases defend him, when he refuses to speak on the topic of politics?

Canadians don't want another Prime Minister who will only address issues that benefit him/her. If Trudeau wants to become the next Prime Minister, he'll need to come forward and start acting like a real candidate for the job. Sadly, as Trudeau stated himself, he would only like to discuss policy at election time.

If that's how he wishes to behave, then the media need to stop coverage. What has become of the media that seek answers, truths, facts, and policies from party leaders? Trudeau-mania 2.0 has created a mockery of the mainstream media and their purpose of informing Canadians of the facts. The truth is, it didn't begin with Justin Trudeau, but it needs to end with him. In order to bring hope and optimism back to politics, Canadians need facts, not opinion, and with that in mind they should be demanding it from journalists!

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ENERGY

Canada: becoming an energy superpower



BY RICHARD J. MARCEAU AND CLEMENT W. BOWMAN

Canada's economic success has depended on being a trading nation. Our vast, largely untapped energy endowment provides an opportunity to trade value-added energy products, shifting from our previous status of an energy superstore to a true energy superpower. Here is the pathway proposed by the Canadian Academy of Engineering.

Electrical Power Exports Electricity represents one of the highest value forms of energy. It has shed all of its formation history, and is ready to instantly

power the modern industrial and social structure of civilization. Canada, however, has yet to take advantage of an outstanding nation-building opportunity. An East-West power corridor supplied from remote hydroelectric and nuclear sites could now be built with nodes for the sale of power North-South to the huge North American market. Canada has the potential to produce the lowest cost electrical power on the continent, based on the most advanced power generation and SMART grid technologies available, with no viable competition in this marketplace. A new national vision, based on a strategic alliance among provinces and existing and new power companies, could achieve this goal within two decades. This is not an objective for any single company or government work-

ing alone. It is the next stage of nation building.

Bitumen Exports Value-added products in the form of fuels and chemicals from Alberta's oil sands are uniquely Canadian opportunities. Shipping raw bitumen outside Canada for processing and upgrading is not the pathway for success. As Jim Stanford has stated, our cycles of staples extraction and export have defined much of our past economic history. There is a danger that the pejorative term of "hewers of wood and drawers of water" will be expanded to "hewers of wood, drawers of water and scrapers of tar." The oilsands bitumen is not a tar; it is a complex mixture of hydrocarbons with a range of boiling points with the heaviest fraction composed of complex chemical ring structures with high economic potential. Selling

bitumen as a low value-fuel is value-destruction on a huge scale, as noted by Frank McKenna. The recently-announced government/industry plan for a new West-East pipeline, and the expressed interest of various regions to upgrade bitumen, is an excellent start for a national strategic plan.

Low Carbon Exports We must also pave the way to a lower-carbon future by taking advantage of Canada's huge land mass. A key element to such a future is to begin transitioning our needs for high-value-added carbon fuels and chemicals to renewable sources of carbon. Transforming biomass from our vast forest and agricultural residues into high value-added products is an important national goal.

East Coast Exports The offshore oil industry in Newfoundland has registered impressive growth

over the past decade, and recent exploration efforts have resulted in potentially significant new reserves. The offshore petroleum industry has driven high economic growth in Newfoundland and Labrador and the new findings are casting a new light on the future role of Atlantic Canada in exporting both crude oil and upgraded products to world markets.

Canada is fortunate to have a team of visionaries who are pressing forward with the above opportunities, part of the Canadian Academy of Engineering's pursuit of 'Canada: Becoming a Sustainable Energy Superpower'.

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