

41st Canadian General Election

May 2nd, 2011



Election Program and Seat Projection

By Ryan W. Janke

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of my election program. Like all elections, this one has a lot of close races, and I hope to highlight a few. There is also a lot going on behind the scenes this time around, and a lot is at stake for some big names in Canadian politics, and my hope is that this paper will be illuminating, and increase everyone's enjoyment of election night.

Long time readers will recognize that this one is a little shorter; there are a few reasons for that. First is that we had a major snowstorm the weekend before the election, and this created a lot of work for me, and cut into the time I usually take to write this document. Another is that few people were actually reading the long format, so I've dropped the full seat projection and my summary of election issues, and focused on the party leaders and a few interesting seats across the country.

For new readers, I do my very best to keep my personal politics out of this document, and over the years I've been accused of shilling for every party, (sometimes even with the same paper,) so I like to think I'm doing a pretty good job of that. This is only meant to be a guide to enjoying election night; it certainly is not my intention to tell anyone how to vote.

Finally, I encourage anyone who takes the time to look at this document to get out and vote. Democracy is far from a perfect system, but it is the best one we've got, and there is no real excuse to neglect one's civil duty. Over the past year we've all watched news footage of people fighting and dying for the rights we take for granted, so please take the time to exercise your own freedom, and stop by your local polls on Election Day!

Cheers,

Ryan W. Janke

The Prediction

Conservative	Liberal	NDP	Bloc Québécois	Green
Stephen Harper	Michael Ignatieff	Jack Layton	Gilles Duceppe	Elizabeth May
145 Seats	60 Seats	76 Seats	27 Seats	0 Seats

I expect a Conservative Minority Government. The big question on the onset of this election was whether or not Stephen Harper could achieve a majority, and it doesn't look as though he will. To do so, the Conservatives would need upsets in 10 races, and while that is very much a possibility, the polls strongly suggest a minority. This could be a serious blow to the Prime Minister, as it will mark the fourth election in which he has failed to achieve a majority, and will likely raise serious questions about his continued leadership of the Conservative Party.

The big winner, then, will be the NDP, who seem poised to form the official opposition. Jack Layton's campaign appears to have overtaken the Liberals for the first time since he took leadership of the New Democratic Party, and if he does become opposition leader, it should guarantee his position as NDP leader for as long as he wants the job. The only thing Mr. Layton needs to worry about is getting out the vote; much of his support comes from younger voters, who are notorious for not voting, and if the NDP fails to capitalize on their surge in popularity, it would be seen as a failure in leadership.

Michael Ignatieff, however, is in more trouble. His party has plummeted in the polls; the 60 seats I'm predicting for his party represents a 17 seat loss from Stephan Dion's 2008 result. If the Liberal Party fails to even achieve Official Opposition status, there is little question that they will oust Ignatieff as leader.

Gilles Duceppe is in even more hot water; his party will likely lose nearly half their presence in the House of Commons, and even his own seat is in jeopardy. If my prediction is anywhere near accurate, Mr. Duceppe will not be leading the Bloc next election, if there is still a Bloc at all.

The Green Party has been included in the above table, not show its irrelevance, but rather to draw attention to the question of whether or not it is a fringe party. The polarizing nature of this election, which often lends itself to strategic voting, could draw support away from the Greens. This, combined with her failed bid to at the debate, will probably raise questions about Elizabeth May's leadership. If the Green Party is to elevate itself above fringe status, they may need a new leader.

In closing, I have to admit that I have never been less confident in my prediction. The Conservatives will win the most seats, the Greens will win the fewest, but that is all I can say for sure. The NDP could win enough seats to form a coalition with the Liberals, or they could find themselves in similar numbers to previous elections. It's impossible to know for sure, which is why we have elections, and why it is always important to get out and vote for the party you support.

Some Seats to Watch

There are a lot of close ridings in this election, but here are ten ridings I think will be interesting.

Random-Burin-St. George's

Traditionally, I've used Avalon as my Newfoundland bell-weather, early indicator district, but I think that one is a lock for Conservative Fabian Manning, so watch the battle between tory John Ottenheimer and grit Judy Foote in Random-Burin-St. George's. Foote is the incumbent, but this is one that the Conservatives could win. If they do, a majority may not be out of the question, but if not, expect to be back at the polls inside of two years.

Halifax West

The Honourable Geoff Regan, a cabinet minister for Prime Minister Martin, is in danger of losing his seat to the surging NDP in the form of challenger Gregor Ash. I'm calling this one for Regan, based mostly on his electoral experience, but it would be a coop for Jack Layton to win this seat.

Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe

This New Brunswick riding should be an easy win for Liberal Brian Murphy, but Conservative Robert Goguen isn't out of the running. This is exactly the sort of race that the Tories will have to win if they are to have any hope of a majority, so this one could be worth watching early on.

Laurier-Sainte-Marie

One thing I am confident about is that la belle province will favour us with dozens of exciting races, but none carry the weight of Laurier-Sainte-Marie; Gilles Duceppe's own seat. By the numbers alone, this one should be a walk for NDP hopeful H  l  ne Laverdi  re, but I'm expecting Duceppe's star power and ability to get out the vote to give him the win, even if by the closest of margins. Nevertheless, unseating the separatist leader would be an NDP accomplishment that may even overshadow Jack Layton's potential move into Stornoway.

Portneuf-Jacques-Cartier

Independent Andr   Arther carried this district in 2008, and much as I like to cheer for an underdog, he's polling below   laine Michaud, who is riding the NDP's popularity in Quebec. What this will show us is whether or not there is any bite to the NDP bark; if they can win this riding, there will be no doubt that they have become a force among francophone voters.

Charlesbourg-Haute-Saint-Charles

Despite the expected Conservative Government and NDP Opposition, there are very few ridings where the two parties are expected to lock horns. There is, however, Charlesbourg-Haute-Saint-Charles, where I expect Conservative incumbent Daniel Petit to lose to Anne-Marie Day. If the NDP can win this Quebec City riding, then they should certainly be the Official Opposition in the next government, but if they cannot, the possibility of a Conservative Majority becomes more likely.

Mississauga South

This district was won by Paul Szabo for the Liberal Party in 2008, but he's in danger of losing this race to Stella Ambler in a traditional Canadian Liberal-Conservative showdown. I'm calling this one for Ambler, but I could see it going either way. If the Grits do lose this one, it will show that their numbers really are down in Ontario, and that would spell bad news for Ignatieff.

Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar

The NDP are surging in Quebec, but if that popularity shows through in the west, expect perennial NDP candidate Nettie Wiebe to unseat Kelly Block in the only close race in Saskatchewan. Block won this seat by only 262 votes in 2008, so the slightest increase in Wiebe, (or her party's,) popularity will swing this seat for the NDP. This is another seat that might signal the fortunes of the parties, as well as the candidates, but by the time we have this result in, we should already know what the next parliament will look like.

Edmonton-Strathcona

Linda Duncan is the only MP from Alberta who doesn't caucus with the Tories, and it seems unlikely that challenger Ryan Hastman will be able to change that. It's a safe bet that the Conservatives have put some serious campaign funding into this riding, but what we have here is a perfect example of strategic voting, which is to say that voters in this district tend to vote against who they don't want, rather than for who they do. The Election Prediction Project, (www.electionprediction.org) has an excellent essay on this one.

Surrey North

Star Conservative candidate Donna Cadman, (the widow of former MP Chuck Cadman,) is polling behind New Democrat Jasbir Sandhu, but it is always interesting to watch a race where the individual popularity of a candidate comes into play. It's easy to ignore British Columbia ridings, since the election result is usually well known by the time the results come in, but that doesn't make these races any less important.

Conclusion

You never really know what is going to happen on Election Day. We have polls all over the place, but the only poll that matters is the last one. Every politician knows that elections are won and lost on the ground; the winner is not the candidate who has the most supporters, but rather the candidate who best gets his or her supporters to the polls.

I haven't addressed the coalition talk, since that is mostly outside the scope of this document, but I will point out that my predicted totals for the Liberals and New Democrats only add to 136 seats, still well short of a majority, and nine seats behind the Conservative's projected 145. It seems unlikely to me that a coalition government could have any hope of survival if it included the Bloc. I also find it unlikely that the Liberal Party of Canada would be a part of a coalition lead by another party.

In any case, my gut feeling is that we will have another minority in Canada's 41st Parliament, and I would be very much surprised if it lasted for as long as the last two have. More likely, the three major parties will take just enough time to lick their wounds, (and in a few cases, maybe even elect a new leader,) then we'll be back at the polls.

Still, I could be wrong. Anything could happen, which is the real fun of Election Day. Feel free to send any comments or comments on this document to ryanjanke@gmail.com, and thank you very much for taking the time to read what I have to say about our 41st election. Enjoy the returns, and by all means, go out and vote!