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FEATURED Q&A

Which Party Has the Edge in Today's Elections in Canada?



Canadians head to the polls today in an election that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (center) called two years early. // File Photo: Facebook Page of Justin Trudeau.

Q Canadians will vote today in an election that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called two years early, saying that Canadians should be able to weigh in on his government's plans for recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. While Trudeau's approval ratings throughout the pandemic have been high, they have fallen in recent weeks, setting up a tight race with Conservative Party leader Erin O'Toole. The election will take place months after the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves near former residential schools for Indigenous children, placing First Nations issues at the forefront of many voters' minds. Will Trudeau maintain enough support to remain in power, and how will the Canadian government's policy priorities change depending on the results? What is riding on the election for Indigenous peoples in Canada in terms of rights, reconciliation and restitution? To what degree is the long-debated U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, which went into force in Canada in June, changing how Canada's government and its Indigenous communities work together?

A Christopher Sands, director of the Canada Institute at the Wilson Center: "From the start, this Canadian election was one that no one in Canada seemed to want except for the prime minister. Justin Trudeau thought his Liberal Party would win a parliamentary majority on the strength of his leadership in the pandemic and subsequently have a freer hand to advance a progressive agenda. Forced to focus on politics, Canadian voters showed a willingness to consider alternatives, and many seem open to a change

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U.S. Begins Mass Expulsions of Haitian Migrants

The United States began expelling Haitian migrants who had been gathered in an encampment in a Texas border town.

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Ecuador Expects Four New Mining Projects by 2025

Ecuador's natural resources ministry said it expects four new mining projects to start production by the end of President Guillermo Lasso's first term in 2025. Lasso has been seeking increased investment to revive the country's economy.

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POLITICAL

Argentina's Fernández Shuffles Cabinet Amid Feud

Argentine President Alberto Fernández shuffled his cabinet as a feud with Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner burst into the open.

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Fernández // File Photo: Argentine Government.

POLITICAL NEWS

Argentine President Shuffles Cabinet Amid Feud With VP

Argentine President Alberto Fernández shuffled his cabinet on Friday night as tensions between the president and the country's vice president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, exploded with the vice president's publishing of an open letter blaming the president's economic policies for the ruling party's losses in the country's Sept. 12 primary elections, the Financial Times reported. Fernández de Kirchner, who was president from 2007 to 2015, blamed the current president for the "political catastrophe" of the primary losses, saying it resulted from the government's mistaken austerity policies, Bloomberg News reported. Fernández de Kirchner also called for an overhaul of the cabinet and called on the president to increase government spending. "They clashed in the worst way, and [this has] continued to escalate. The president threatened to govern alone, and Cristina blamed him for the electoral failure," political analyst Marcos Novaro told the Financial Times. "They might try to mend fences after this, but the damage is done." The president's cabinet reshuffle increased Fernández de Kirchner's power and paved the way for increases in state spending, the newspaper reported. Among the changes, the president replaced his cabinet chief, Santiago Cafiero, with Juan Manzur, the governor of Tucumán province. Fernández de Kirchner had suggested him for the job in her open letter. Foreign Minister Felipe Solá, Security Minister Sabina Frederic and Education Minister Nicolás Trotta also were replaced. Fernández de Kirchner's open letter also criticized the president's spokesman, Juan Pablo Biondi, who resigned hours after the letter was published. Economy Minister Martín Guzmán, whom the vice president's allies have criticized for his attempts to lower the country's deficit, was not removed in the reshuffle. Fernández de Kirchner denied that she wanted Guzmán to be replaced, but Argentine media speculated that

he is being left in place until the government reaches a new deal with the International Monetary Fund to replace its failed \$45 billion deal with the lender, the Financial Times reported. In her letter, Fernández de Kirchner argued that Argentina was following "a mistaken policy of fiscal adjustment" that "undoubtedly was going to have electoral consequences." Argentina had its ninth sovereign default in 2020, and its economy collapsed 10 percent that year. Inflation is running higher than 50 percent, among the world's highest rates.

U.S. Begins Mass Expulsion of Haitian Migrants From Texas

The United States flew more than 320 Haitians who had been camped at a border town in Texas back to the Caribbean nation on Sunday in what is gearing up to be the United States' quickest large-scale expulsion of migrants in decades, the Associated Press reported. U.S. authorities are expected to expel many of the more than 12,000 migrants camped around the bridge in Del Rio, Tex. after they crossed the border from Mexico's Ciudad Acuña. Three flights left for Port-au-Prince on Sunday, six more flights are slated for Tuesday, and the U.S. administration plans to begin seven daily flights on Wednesday, four to the Haitian capital city of Port-au-Prince and three to Cap-Haïtien, an unnamed U.S. official told the AP. The official also said that flights will continue to depart from San Antonio, but more could be added leaving from El Paso. The Haitian government urged the United States to halt the flights, The New York Times reported, as the Caribbean country is mired in political crisis following the July assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and allegations that the country's prime minister might have been linked to one of the key suspects in the case. The government has also been struggling to deliver humanitarian aid to thousands who were affected by a 7.2-magnitude earthquake more than a month ago. Jean Negot Bonheur Delva, the head of Haiti's national migration office, said authorities expect 14,000 Haitians

NEWS BRIEFS

Brazil's Lula Leads Bolsonaro by 18 Percentage Points in Poll

Former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva continues to lead current President Jair Bolsonaro in polls ahead of the 2022 presidential election, according to a Datafolha survey released Friday, Reuters reported. However, voter support for Lula was down two percentage points to 44 percent, while Bolsonaro gained a percentage point to 26 percent. In a simulated runoff, Lula would win 56 percent of votes against Bolsonaro's 31 percent, compared to 58 percent versus 31 percent in July. The variation since July fell within the poll's margin of error, the wire service reported.

Costa Rica's President Warns of More Instability in Developing World

Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado warned that the threat of instability would be high in the developing world without more financial support from wealthier nations and the International Monetary Fund, the Financial Times reported Sunday. Tightened income and higher social spending during the pandemic have squeezed governments in the region and are putting pressure on society, Alvarado told the newspaper. "There's a lot of social demands, there's a big risk of economic, political and social instability in developing economies," Alvarado said.

A.M. Best Downgrades Ratings of Bupa México

Ratings agency A.M. Best on Friday downgraded its financial strength rating and its long-term issuer credit rating from good to marginal and its Mexico national scale rating from superior to good for insurer Bupa México. The agency maintained its stable ratings for the company. The ratings reflect a weak balance sheet, A.M. Best said.

to be expelled from the United States in the next three weeks, the newspaper reported. "The Haitian state is not really able to receive these deportees," Bonheur Delva said.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Ecuador Expecting Four New Major Mining Projects by '25

Ecuador expects four major mining projects to begin production by the end of President Guillermo Lasso's first term in 2025, as the president looks to diversify the economy, the natural resources ministry said on Friday, Reuters reported. Lasso seeks to bring in private investment to revive the economy following a deep recession last year which was made worse by the government's fiscal deficit. Ecuador has huge mineral reserves but has lagged behind neighboring countries such as Peru and Chile in developing large-scale mines, Reuters reported. Three gold concessions to Canadian firms, including Dundee Precious Metals' Loma Larga, Atico Mining Corp.'s La Plata and Adventus Mining Corp.'s Curipamba, are all in the advanced exploration stage and are expected to begin operations in 2023, the ministry said in a statement. Meanwhile, Australian miner SolGold PLC's Cascabel concession is expected to start copper production in 2025, the ministry added. Ecuador's mining sector has faced a challenging scenario as environmental activists and Indigenous communities oppose mining projects. Local communities in the city of Cuenca earlier this year voted to ban mining activities near rivers, and a recent court ruling paved the way for a similar ballot initiative in Quito. The community-led opposition in turn has slowed down the development of mineral deposits, Reuters reported in July. "The country needs to provide a secure, clear legal framework to continue attracting foreign direct investment," Nathan Monash, head of the industry association, the Mining Chamber of Ecuador, said in an interview with the wire service.

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in Ottawa. Among the opposition, Conservative Erin O'Toole has positioned himself as a centrist and plausible prime minister with a safe pair of hands to steer Canada through turbulence ahead. The persistence of the pandemic, weak economic performance, horrifying discoveries of hundreds of Indigenous children in mass graves, grim data on climate change, rising belligerence from China and the shambolic retreat from Afghanistan have Canadians in a pessimistic mood. The United States, as always, casts a shadow over Canadian thinking. Trudeau was a poised partner for President Obama and was able to stand up to President Trump while continuing to work with the United States on important issues such as trade and securing Canada's market access to the United States via the USMCA. President Biden needs more help from Canada than he can give in return, and in recent weeks many Canadians have been forced to consider Canada's uncertain future without strong U.S. leadership. Trudeau's snap election call has awakened more doubt than enthusiasm about his leadership and Canada's future. He may lose, or worse, he may win another minority government."

A Duane Bratt, professor of political science at Mount Royal University in Alberta: "Canada's federal election is a tossup.

When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called the election in mid-August, his objective was to convert his minority government into a majority. It seemed reasonable because his Liberal Party was leading its chief rival, the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), by five to eight percentage points in public opinion polling. However, Trudeau was hamstrung in his campaign from day one. On the day that the election was called, Kabul had fallen to the Taliban, and the issue of evacuating interpreters and staffers who had assisted Canada's military and diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan was front-page news. In addition, Canada was starting to

hit the fourth wave of Covid-19. Despite four weeks of questions, Trudeau has yet to really explain why the election was called. Polls are now effectively tied. Meanwhile, CPC leader Erin O'Toole has run a surprisingly strong campaign. The Liberals clearly underestimated O'Toole, who has moderated many traditional CPC positions. Last April, he brought in a complicated price on carbon to address climate change, a major reversal from the actions of previous CPC leader Andrew Scheer, who did not accept that Canadians were concerned about climate change. O'Toole has also emphasized that he is pro-choice and supports public health care, shielding him from traditional Liberal attacks. When the Liberals attacked O'Toole over a potential repeal of assault rifle bans, he quickly reversed himself. The discovery of unmarked graves near former residential schools for Indigenous children put Indigenous reconciliation on the agenda. Trudeau's recent appointment of Mary Simon as the first governor-general of Indigenous descent was an effort to take ownership of the issue. However, Trudeau is also vulnerable due to unfulfilled previous campaign promises of clean drinking water on reserves. In addition, Jody Wilson-Raybould, the first Indigenous justice minister who resigned from cabinet in February 2019 over pressure from Trudeau and his senior political staff, has just released a damning tell-all book."

A Jenni Byrne, CEO of Jenni Byrne + Associates and former deputy chief of staff and national campaign director to former

Prime Minister Stephen Harper: "Canada is in the middle of an election that some have described as Seinfeldian—a campaign about nothing. Despite a faltering economy, a pandemic, foreign policy challenges with China and the United States and an awakening on reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the national party leaders have spent their time talking about firearms, social media slipups and Quebec nationalism. While the polls

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show a close race, it is becoming increasingly likely that Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party will be re-elected with a minority government. One of the interesting trends has been the role that right-wing populism may have on the election result. Focusing on typical populist issues such as immigration and 'woke' policies, the People's Party of Canada (PPC) has never garnered more than 2 percent of the vote. However, during Covid-19, Canada has had some of the strictest public health restrictions in the world, and there is a national debate surrounding mandatory vaccinations. The PPC has been able to seize on this and is seeing a surge in the polls. It has also attacked the Conservative Party's moves closer to the center of the political spectrum. The PPC is presently sitting at around 8 percent in the polls. It is unlikely it will win a seat in Parliament, but it has the potential to play the spoiler in several riding-level races. If Conservative leader Erin O'Toole is kept out of the prime minister's office, it will be because of the PPC's surge and fractures within the right wing of Canadian politics."

A Pamela D. Palmater, professor and chair in Indigenous governance at Ryerson University in Toronto: "Federal party leaders who do not present a comprehensive plan to address ongoing human rights abuses against Indigenous peoples in Canada may well find themselves with lower voter support. In a recent survey, the majority of Canadians indicated that reconciliation with Indigenous peoples will influence how they vote in this election, which is not a surprise given that Indigenous issues have dominated the media headlines since the last election less than two years ago. Headlines included the National Inquiry into Missing

and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls mission's findings in 2019 that Canada is guilty of both historic and ongoing genocide against Indigenous women and girls, as well as anti-police racism protests, lack of clean water on reserves and thousands of

“ In a recent survey, the majority of Canadians indicated that reconciliation with Indigenous peoples will influence how they vote in this election.”

— Pamela D. Palmater

unmarked graves of Indigenous children who died in residential schools. During their time in office, the Liberals passed Bill C-15, which confirmed the application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Canadian law and mandates that the federal government implement it. The issue on many voters' minds is whether to trust that the Liberals will live up to this commitment, given their previous broken promises, or risk a substantive change in government by electing the Conservatives who voted against Bill C-15 and who seek to fast-track the extraction of resources from Indigenous lands without free, prior or informed consent. Liberals might just squeak by with another minority government, but many hope that the UNDRIP will help shield Indigenous peoples' human rights from future government breaches."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org.

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