THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CHOOSES A LEADER

Introduction

The new Conservative Party of Canada has deep roots in this country. This party grew out of the first federal party that governed our country; at Confederation, in 1867, the Conservatives were in power and dominated Canadian politics for the next three decades, losing popularity during the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1940s the Conservative Party incorporated elements of the old Progressive Party and adopted the new label Progressive Conservative Party (PC Party). However, the party continued to struggle electorally until 1983, when leader Brian Mulroney was elected prime minister. The PCs remained in power until the Liberals won a sweeping majority in 1993. The PCs were devastated and won only two seats.

During this time the Reform Party was formed, and by the late 1990s the Reform Party tried to convince the PC Party to join a United Alternative of the right. The PCs were not interested in a merger. The Reform Party then changed its name to the Canadian Alliance. In the 2000 federal election the PCs and the Canadian Alliance competed for votes, and the Liberal Party won yet another majority. Serious talks began between the Alliance and the PCs in September 2003, and they agreed to merge in December of 2003. They named their new party the Conservative Party of Canada. A leadership race began in January 2004.

Belinda Stronach, Tony Clement, and Stephen Harper soon declared their candidacies. Each aimed to not only be leader of the new party, but also the next prime minister of Canada during the next federal election. Belinda Stronach had served as CEO of Magna International, an auto parts company that her father had built. She has often been portrayed as a spoiled little rich girl who inherited her millions and her powerful position from her father. Although she had no previous political experience, Stronach did play the role of facilitator during the merging of the Alliance and the PC parties.

Tony Clement came to the leadership race with plenty of political experience, most recently his eight-year stint in the Ontario PC Party as a cabinet minister, with four portfolios, from 1995 to 2003. Clement was described by the media as “geeky” and lacking confidence. He countered these portrayals with promises of being the only candidate with tested political experience and appeal to more than just Western Canada.

Stephen Harper stepped down from being the leader of the Alliance Party to take part in the race. He was considered the likely winner from the start of the race. Harper was bilingual, had the most political experience of all three candidates, and had been one of the driving forces in creating the new Conservative Party of Canada.

As the three candidates hit the campaign trail it became obvious that they only differed on a few political issues. Belinda Stronach appeared to be the most moderate of the three because of her support for same-sex marriage and her pro-choice stance on abortion. The candidates agreed on many campaign issues, including increasing support for the military, lowering taxes, cancelling the gun registry, repealing the decriminalization of marijuana, and forging closer ties with the United States by developing a North American security perimeter. Because their political beliefs were so similar, the race was
more focused on experience, reputation, and campaigning skill.

The leadership campaign lasted 59 days. Harper dominated Western Canada, the heartland of the old Reform and Alliance parties. Stronach was ahead in Quebec and the Maritimes, two areas where the PCs either had strength or were once dominant. Despite support for Stronach from important PC leaders such as former prime minister Brian Mulroney and former Ontario premier Mike Harris, Harper pulled ahead early in the voting and never fell behind. The final breakdown was: Harper, 55.5 per cent; Stronach, 35 per cent; and Clement 9.5 per cent. Once the votes had been counted Harper made his victory speech and warned his party: “The tired, old, corrupt Liberal Party is cornered like an angry rat. They are going to attack us like never before” (National Post, March 21, 2004).

He delivered high praise to Stronach and Clement, and indicated he looked forward to working with them as important members of the party. His speech ended with an attempt to reach out to all four branches of his party: the Red Tories, the economic conservatives, the social conservatives, and the democratic reformers. With the political right united in name, it is up to Harper to foster a cohesive and effective party. Since the next federal election will most likely be held in spring or fall 2004, the Conservative Party of Canada has mere months to put together a campaign to convince Canadians they have a solid alternative to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Questions
1. Briefly retrace the history of the Conservative Party of Canada since 1867.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Why do you think the candidates share the same opinions on so many political issues?

________________________________________________________________________

3. Of the three candidates whom would you have voted for as leader? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

4. Develop a list of three suggestions you would give the Conservative Party in order to help them to win the upcoming federal election.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
1. What two parties recently merged in Canada?

2. Complete this chart. You may need to finalize it after the video ends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>My Impressions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Harper</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Clement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belinda Stronach</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. What three issues did the candidates agree on?

4. What Liberal problem convinced many Conservatives that they might be electing not just a leader, but a future prime minister?

5. In your view, which candidate is the best public speaker?

6. Do you think that the new Conservative Party can defeat the Liberals in an election later this year? Explain in your notebook.
The birth of the new Conservative Party in 2003 is but one event in a long series of name changes and coalitions for the conservative movement in Canada. The twists and turns of this party's history make for an interesting and complex understanding of Canadian politics.

1867 Called the Liberal-Conservative Party at the time of Confederation, it is led by John A. Macdonald and dominates Canadian politics for the first three decades after Confederation. By the 1870s, the party is known simply as the Conservative Party and is a strong supporter of Canada's British connection. After Macdonald's death, a series of leaders fails to keep the party popular. Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberals govern from 1896 to 1911.

1917 Eager to unite Canadians in the face of the terrible divisions of the First World War, Conservative PM Sir Robert Borden (first elected in 1911) invites Liberals to join his government and forms a Unionist government that easily wins the famous "Khaki" election of 1917. Borden retires in 1920. His successor Arthur Meighen fails to keep the Unionists together, and the party finds electoral success difficult.

1930s Prime Minister R.B. Bennett forms a Conservative government, but the persistence of the Great Depression leads to its defeat in 1935. The rise of new parties such as Social Credit, Progressive, and the CCF (later NDP), also offer competition for the Conservative Party.

1942 When John Bracken is elected leader, the Conservative Party incorporates elements of the old Progressive Party and adopts the new label Progressive Conservative Party (PC Party). The party promises a more reform-minded platform. Victory continues to elude the party.

1957-1963 Progressive Conservative leader John Diefenbaker wins a huge victory in 1958 (208 of 265 seats). However, his government soon disintegrates under his erratic leadership and scandals. Defeated in 1963, Diefenbaker is later forced out as leader in a bitterly divisive leadership battle in 1967.

1963-1983 Aside from Progressive Conservative Joe Clark briefly being prime minister for several months in 1979, there are two more decades of Liberal rule in Canada after Diefenbaker. This is in part due to the growth of the independence movement in Quebec and the inability of conservative voters to organize into one party.

1983 Brian Mulroney wins the PC leadership race in a divisive campaign following Joe Clark's "loss of party confidence." Mulroney quickly moves to unite Conservatives across the country and rebuilds the party in Quebec by attracting soft nationalists to his side.

1984 Mulroney leads the PCs to a smashing majority victory (211 seats) and, as prime minister, tries to persuade Quebec to sign the Canadian Constitution, which it had refused to sign when it was enacted in 1982.

1987 Mulroney and the provincial premiers negotiate the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord that was intended to recognize Quebec as a distinct society within Canada. In Alberta, the Reform Party is founded, with Preston Manning as its leader. It champions right-wing policies, Western regional issues, and is strongly opposed to the Meech Lake Accord. It soon siphons off conservative votes in Western Canada. (Stephen Harper is an important policymaker for the new party.)
1988 Mulroney announces his intentions to negotiate a free-trade agreement with the United States. He calls an election on the deal and defeats his Liberal and NDP opponents, who split the anti-free-trade agreement vote between them. Mulroney becomes the first Conservative federal leader to win back-to-back majority election victories since John A. Macdonald.

1989-1992 The Free-Trade Agreement comes into effect, the Meech Lake Accord fails, the seven-per-cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) is implemented, and the Charlottetown Accord, another attempt to reach a constitutional deal, is voted down in a national referendum. Mulroney’s personal popularity plummets, and elements of his party begin to fragment into the Reform and Bloc Québécois parties.

1993 The unpopularity of his policies forces Mulroney to retire from office. Kim Campbell, Canada’s first female prime minister, leads the party to its most humiliating result in any federal election in Canadian history. The party wins a mere two seats. The Liberal Party wins a majority, the Reform Party sweeps the West, and the Bloc Québécois becomes the Official Opposition.

1997 The Liberal Party wins another majority, with the Reform Party coming in second. The PC Party remains the smallest of the five parties in Parliament. The new leader, Jean Charest, resigns to become leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec. He later becomes Premier of Quebec.

1998-2000 Joe Clark comes out of retirement to lead the PC Party for a second time. Preston Manning tries to convince the PCs to join what he calls a United Alternative of the right. The Reform Party changes its name to the Canadian Alliance and chooses Stockwell Day as its new leader. Day, like Manning, promotes right-wing unity, but the PCs do not want to take part in a merger. In the 2000 federal election the PCs and the Canadian Alliance compete for votes, and the Liberal Party wins another large majority. Stockwell Day, although winning new seats, is soon discredited as a credible leader.

2001-2002 Some Alliance and PC MPs unite under the name Democratic Reform Caucus to indicate their dissatisfaction with Stockwell Day. Stephen Harper replaces Day as the leader of the Canadian Alliance Party, and most members of the Democratic Reform Caucus return to the Canadian Alliance Party.

2003 Joe Clark resigns as PC Party leader, and Peter MacKay wins the leadership race. MacKay begins merger talks with Harper even though he had earlier pledged to fight a merger of the two parties. On December 12 the two parties join to become the new Conservative Party of Canada.

2004 Stephen Harper beats Belinda Stronach and Tony Clement in the Conservative Party of Canada leadership race. The new leader prepares to take his new united, right-of-centre party into a federal election expected within a few months.

(Source: Adapted from News in Review, November 2003 and Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2003)
Questions

1. Identify the different party names conservatives have adopted since Confederation.

2. Who was the most successful Conservative leader in the 19th century?

3. Who was the most successful Conservative leader in the 20th century?

4. In your opinion, which leader of the past versions of the Conservative Party has been the best leader? Explain.

5. In your opinion, how successful will Stephen Harper be in keeping his party united? Why?

6. Why do you think Canadians have generally been unwilling to give the Conservative Party as much support as they have given to the Liberal Party?
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### The Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Belinda Stronach</th>
<th>Tony Clement</th>
<th>Stephen Harper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stronach on leading the party:</td>
<td>“We need to restore people’s faith in government and democratic institutions and the political process, particularly young people. I can do that. I will do that.” — <em>The Globe and Mail</em>, January 21, 2004</td>
<td>“Canadians need answers from us too . . . Canadians want experience, someone who knows how to govern. . . . They want a bridge-builder.” — <em>The Globe and Mail</em>, February 23, 2004</td>
<td>Harper on leading the party: “It’s not just about who will make the best leader of the opposition. . . . It is about who is ready to become prime minister of this country.” — <em>The Globe and Mail</em>, February 23, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>Divorced twice; single mother; two children</td>
<td>Married to Lynne Golding, a lawyer; three children</td>
<td>Married to Laureen for 10 years; two children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>One year of Business Studies courses from York University</td>
<td>Political Science degree and Law degree from University of Toronto</td>
<td>Economics undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Calgary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Experience</strong></td>
<td>Until the leadership race she worked for Magna International, a major automotive supplier owned by her father. She became CEO in 2001, president in 2002, and has been named the most powerful woman in Canadian business and the second most powerful woman in international business.</td>
<td>Before he ran for public office in 1995 he worked as a lawyer in Central and Eastern Europe as a consultant to Western companies and local governments seeking counsel on privatization and economic restructuring. He also served as president of the PC Party of Ontario.</td>
<td>He worked in the energy industry in Alberta, and at the University of Calgary where he taught as a sessional lecturer. He was an economist, and became President of the National Citizens Coalition in 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Experience</strong></td>
<td>Never held political office. She was a key behind-the-scenes facilitator of the merger negotiations between the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance Party.</td>
<td>He became president of the Ontario PC Party in 1990 and was elected as an MPP in Ontario in 1995. He served as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Environment, Transportation, and Health. He was a Founding President of the Canadian Alliance Party in 2000. He ran unsuccessfully for the leadership of the Ontario PC Party in 2002. He lost his seat as an MPP when the Ontario PCs were defeated in 2003.</td>
<td>He worked for a PC MP in 1981, and a Reform MP in 1988. He was elected as a Reform MP in 1993. He became leader of the Canadian Alliance Party and was elected to the House of Commons in 2002. He oversaw the Alliance’s merger with the PC Party to form the new Conservative Party of Canada in 2003. He was elected leader of the Conservative Party of Canada in March 2004.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inquiry

1. Read the three quotes at the top of the chart. What do they reveal about each candidate? With which quote do you most agree? Why?

2. Make a list of qualities the candidates for the Conservative Party of Canada leadership race had in common.

3. Which candidate would you have chosen and why? Use specific reasons to support your answer.

4. Which one of the three candidates has the most political experience?

5. Should experience make a difference when choosing a political leader? Explain your answer.

6. What question would you ask each of the candidates about leading the new Conservative Party of Canada?

7. Why do you think Stephen Harper won the leadership race in March 2004?

8. Use the same headings in the left-hand column on the chart and develop a profile of your ideal political leader.

9. Would you like to lead a national political party in Canada? Why or why not?

10. Are you going to get involved in election campaigns in the future? Explain.

Quote
“...I have to reach out to everyone. I'm leading a unified party. There is a need for us to be united so that we can defeat the Liberal Party.” — Stephen Harper, *National Post*, March 22, 2004
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### Candidates’ Policies and Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belinda Stronach</th>
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<th>Stephen Harper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Same Sex Marriage**  
- permit same-sex marriages, but would not force churches to conduct ceremonies  
- vote to redefine the traditional definition of marriage  |  
- does not endorse same-sex marriage  
- vote to retain the traditional definition of marriage  |  
- does not endorse same-sex marriage  
- vote to retain the traditional definition of marriage  |
| **Health Care**  
- committed to universal public health care  
- open parliamentary debate about how to provide better services  
- consider two-tier health care  |  
- committed to universal public health care  
- allow more private sector delivery of publicly funded services, including day surgeries  |  
- committed to universal public health care  
- change the Canada Health Act to allow the provinces to implement private health-care delivery |
| **Taxes**  
- lower corporate and personal tax rates  
- get rid of the tax on capital investment  
- make mortgage interest tax deductible  
- allow parents and students to deduct post-secondary tuition from income tax  |  
- exempt Canadians turning 18 from paying federal taxes on their first $250 000 in earnings  
- cut the capital gains tax  |  
- cut taxes to make Canada the “lowest-taxing economy in the world”  
- implement the gas transfer tax for the municipalities and cut all federally funded programs |
| **Foreign Affairs**  
- forge closer ties with the U.S.  
- develop a secure, North American security perimeter with the U.S.  |  
- forge closer ties with the U.S.  
- develop a secure, North American security perimeter with the U.S.  |  
- forge closer ties with the U.S.  
- develop a secure, North American security perimeter with the U.S.  |
| **Military**  
- rebuild military with new equipment and funding of $1-billion per year for 10 years  |  
- provide adequate funding for decent pay and updated equipment  
- eradicate defence deficit  |  
- rebuild over-extended military  |
| **Environment**  
- develop a Canada-U.S. solution to saving the environment rather than an international treaty like Kyoto  |  
- develop a Canada-U.S. solution to saving the environment rather than an international treaty like Kyoto  |  
- develop a made-in-Canada solution to saving the environment rather than an international treaty like Kyoto  |
| **Gun Registry**  
- get rid of gun registry  |  
- get rid of gun registry  |  
- get rid of gun registry  |
Did you know . . .
In Ontario, in the 2000 election Conservative and Alliance votes exceeded Liberal votes in 24 of 103 ridings? It is statistics like these that encourage supporters of the newly united Conservative Party of Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belinda Stronach</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marijuana</strong></td>
<td>• repeal decriminalization of marijuana laws</td>
<td>• repeal decriminalization of marijuana laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abortion</strong></td>
<td>• pro-choice on abortion</td>
<td>• pro-choice on abortion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Economy**      | • put more money into education  
|                  | • increase job creation  
|                  | • decrease the cost of social services | • give more money to municipalities  
|                  | • strengthen Free Trade Agreement of the Americas | • strengthen Free Trade Agreement of the Americas  
|                  | | • encourage private sector to create jobs |

**To Consider**

1. List the major similarities and differences of the positions the candidates had on the central issues in the campaign. In your opinion are there more similarities or differences in their positions?

2. With which positions do you most agree? Why?

3. With which positions do you most disagree? Why?

4. Which positions do you not understand or need more information about?

5. Assume the role of a reporter. Create three interview questions to ask each of the three candidates.

6. Based on the positions revealed in the chart write a paragraph explaining which candidate you would have voted for and why.

7. Do you think the positions held by Stephen Harper have the support of most Canadians? Why? Why not?

8. If a federal election were held today, would you support the new Conservative Party of Canada? Explain fully.
Read the following collage of statements by or about the major leadership candidates for the recent leadership race of the new Conservative Party of Canada. For each, check off whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Be prepared to explain your position to your peers. When finished reading and responding to the quotes, answer the questions at the end of this section.

1. “This business is supposed to be about service to others. I don’t like talking about myself. I know politicians who go home and have the video running so they can watch their every appearance. But I hate watching myself on television.” — Stephen Harper, *National Post*, March 6, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________

2. Referring to Belinda Stronach: “It’s astounding, really. Is there any other practice, profession or business in which an application like hers would be taken seriously? Or would her résumé have been shuffled summarily to the bottom of the pile when it became clear that no matter how attractive and likeable a person she was, not only did she not have the experience germane to the job, but she had not completed university, not done any public service of note, and was not even bilingual.” — Judith Timson, *The Globe and Mail*, March 3, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________

3. “Give me 40 days in the campaign trenches with Paul Martin, and I will give you the keys to 24 Sussex Drive. . . . I am ready to be prime minister of Canada.” — Belinda Stronach, *National Post*, March 6, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________

4. “It is essential to have a leader who can speak French, who can debate in French to win seats in Quebec.” — Stephen Harper, *Toronto Star*, March 8, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________

5. Referring to Belinda Stronach: “Not much fire, and certainly not worth giving up a Sunday afternoon when someone was offering to watch it for you. And yet, despite everything, there remains this nagging sense that someone very important was standing on that stage Sunday afternoon. Perhaps not the future prime minister of Canada. But close.” — Roy MacGregor, *The Globe and Mail*, March 8, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________

6. “‘Our new party needs a new leader who can build bridges between all parts of Canada and ensure we can and will all work together,’ the former Ontario health minister thundered. . . . In a shot at Harper, who has alienated some in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, and Stronach, who does not speak French, Clement said the Conservatives must be modern and moderate.” — Robert Benzie, *Toronto Star*, March 20, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________

7. “Politics is very much a personal activity. Sure there’s technology and databases, but unless you understand how important it is to have the personal touch, you’re not going to be very successful for very long. That’s something I feel I excel at.” — Tony Clement, *Toronto Star*, March 15, 2004

Agree __________ Disagree __________
8. 'She's a candidate not because she's demonstrated substance on policy or political commitment. She's a candidate because she has money.' — former PC leader, Joe Clark, Toronto Star, March 16, 2004
Agree _________ Disagree _________

9. “I think we can all agree that lower taxes are better,” Stronach said. It wasn’t the only time in the 90-minute debate when the three contenders for the party’s leadership found themselves nodding in agreement. On questions of the gun registry, Senate reform, the deficit, and funding for the Armed Forces, Stronach, Harper and Clement gave much the same answer. The debate was a sometimes testy exchange but it was no great clash of ideological visions for the new party.” — Bruce Campion-Smith, Toronto Star, February 28, 2004
Agree _________ Disagree _________

10. “Conservatives should pick their battles carefully and make their arguments skilfully.” — Stephen Harper, Toronto Star, March 27, 2004
Agree _________ Disagree _________

Questions
1. With which quote do you most agree? Why?

2. With which quote do you most disagree? Why?

3. Do you think that Belinda Stronach is a likely candidate for prime minister in the future? Explain.

4. Read quote number six. Clement is saying the new leader needs to be “modern and moderate.” What does he mean? Why is this a shot at Harper and Stronach?

5. Read quote number seven. What is Clement saying? Provide an example of a politician having a “personal touch.” Do you agree or disagree with him? Support your opinion.

6. Although Harper has clearly won the leadership race, do you believe that he is the candidate most likely to win a federal election? Explain fully in your notebook.
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Final Activity: Strategy Session

In the next federal election Stephen Harper will be leading the new Conservative Party of Canada. His national competitors will be Jack Layton from the New Democratic Party (NDP) and Paul Martin from the Liberal Party. Gilles Duceppe leads the Bloc Québécois, a powerhouse only in the province of Quebec. The most important thing for Harper's Conservative Party is to make sure they have a successful electoral strategy in place well before the campaigning begins. If he can win enough seats to control the House of Commons, Harper will become the next prime minister of Canada. Assume that you are a member of Harper’s election planning team charged with designing a successful campaign strategy.

Instructions


2. In groups fill in a Campaign Strategy Organizer using the ideas your group believes will lead Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada to victory in the next federal election.

Campaign Strategy Organizer

Know Your Audience

1. What segments of the Canadian population do you already appeal to? Be specific.
2. What segments of the Canadian population do you still need to reach out to and convince to vote for you? Be specific.

Party Message

1. State the message that summarizes the party’s beliefs and intentions if elected.
2. Design a powerful slogan that will appear on television, billboards, pamphlets, buttons, bumper stickers, and radio.
3. List the three major campaign issues the party should focus on during the campaign (e.g., the sponsorship scandal, environment, health care, taxes, foreign affairs). Explain the party’s stance on each of the issues and why it should win votes.
4. Note the party’s major weaknesses and suggest a way to deal with them.

Campaigning With a Purpose

1. From an image consultant’s perspective, offer detailed suggestions to help improve Harper’s and the Conservative Party’s appeal to Canadians.
2. List the strategies that should be used to attract younger voters and convince them to vote for Harper and the Conservative Party.
3. List ways to target the segments of the population that are undecided about whom to support.