

Bill C-51 is dominating the news media and social media this week. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the Conservatives have limited debate and have firmly shut down any suggestion of greater parliamentary oversight. An Angus Reid poll says over 80 per cent of Canadians surveyed support tougher anti-terrorism measures, but about two thirds also say they want greater oversight. This puts the Liberals in the right spot in terms of a 'practical political' position -- a term used by former Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Joe Clark to describe Justin Trudeau's approach to the Bill. Clark also picked up on the fact that the Liberals would likely make greater oversight a campaign issue.

The NDP has continued to oppose the Bill vigorously, but just today, leader Tom Mulcair said he would amend the Bill but not dispense with it if he forms government. This puts him and the Liberals on about the same page in terms of an end-game.

PM Harper announced this week that the government was going to appeal a court decision quashing its attempt to ban a Muslim woman from taking the oath of Canadian citizenship while wearing a niqab - a face covering veil. This is seen as an attempt to keep terrorist-related matters top of mind, and according to Toronto Star columnist Tim Harper, to keep Canadians from noticing the sad state of the economy.

With a federal budget still not expected until May, the chances of the election being held as scheduled this fall continue to improve. As a result, some of the ABC (Anybody But Conservative) groups are beginning to commit to more sophisticated campaigns. This past weekend, Lead Now mobilized 100 canvassers in the Vancouver Granville riding, looking for people to pledge to vote strategically to prevent the Conservatives from winning the seat. Lead Now will do polling to determine which of the Liberal, NDP or Green candidates has the best chance of winning and have each of them submit answers to a questionnaire that will explore their positions on the economy, democratic reform and safety. They will use the results to choose the candidate they will advise their membership to support.

This is the third anniversary of the breaking news about election fraud in the 2011 vote.

Our messages to the public:

Bill C-51, Anti-terrorism Act, 2015

Bill C-51 includes significant measures that will help keep Canadians safe, and as such, the Liberal Party of Canada will support this legislation.

We welcome the measures that build on the powers of preventative arrest, make better use of no-fly lists, and allow for immediate and more coordinated information sharing by government departments and agencies.

However, there are concerns with Bill C-51, and we hear them. Liberals will propose amendments on oversight, on review, and on narrowing the overly broad definition of national security.

Specifically, the Liberal Party will bring forward amendments to: focus and clarify the overly broad scope of the new powers that have been a source of concern for many Canadians; create a national security oversight body of parliamentarians, as is the case for all of our partners in the Five Eyes alliance; and require a mandatory review of Bill C-51, in its entirety, after three years.

We hope that the government is serious in its approach, and that it will set aside partisanship in order to keep Canadians safe while protecting our rights and values. The current government can accept that Canadians want greater oversight and accountability, or it will give us the opportunity to offer that in our election platform.

When a government asks its citizens to give up even a small portion of their liberty, it is that government's highest responsibility to guarantee that its new powers will not be abused. We also know that the individual freedoms we cherish as Canadians cannot exist without collective security.

Our response to terrorism must not be confined; it must include a robust plan for preventing radicalization before it takes root. Equally, we must ensure that our security agencies are adequately resourced so that they can carry out the new tasks required of them.

Please view and share Mr. Trudeau's [remarks](#) in the House of Commons on Bill C-51.

Please view yesterday's Globe and Mail [op-ed](#) on national security oversight.

Citizenship oath

We need leadership that brings Canadians together. Instead, Mr. Harper is focused on personal attacks and dividing Canadians. That is his idea of politics - and it is one of the many reasons that Canada needs new leadership.

Our country is strong not in spite of its differences, but precisely because of them. We know how important it is to protect the rights of minorities in Canada.

The woman in question unveiled herself for the ceremony, and her identity was confirmed by officials. We disagree with the government's decision to appeal the court's ruling on the right to wear the niqab during the citizenship oath.

It is the Prime Minister's responsibility to focus on what unites us, rather than what divides us.

Please view and share recent coverage by [The Canadian Press](#).

Items of interest from the news and the party:

-More on Bill C-51:

<http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/bill-c-51-could-be-biggest-bait-and-switch-canada-has-ever-seen-opinion>

<http://www.pressprogress.ca/en/post/6-ways-you-may-have-already-broken-harpers-new-anti-terror-law>

-The politics of fear can't be sustained...sooner or later the economy will emerge as the big issue:

<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/22/stephen-harper-in-a-sweet-spot-that-cant-be-sustained-tim-harper.html>

-...except in the PMO, where Mr. Harper is increasingly isolated - a Party of One:

http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/the-loneliest-of-all-prime-ministers/article23116954/?click=sf_globefb

-Justin Trudeau's 'medicare' approach to climate change won't work, according to Jeffrey Simpson:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/medicare-wont-fix-climate-change/article22900905/>

-The Conservatives' 2012 changes to Employment Insurance and Old Age Security generated a hostile response from Canadians according to records just now being released. But will anyone remember in 2015?

<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/pmo-flooded-with-angry-emails-over-employment-insurance-changes-and-oas>

-While the Employment Insurance fund sits in a surplus, 40% of unemployed Canadians are not entitled to benefits or job training. The provinces are beginning to turn up the heat on the federal government:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/ottawa-provinces-ready-to-battle-over-employment-insurance-surplus/article22905777/>

-The Council of Canadians is going to court over the Fair Elections Act:

<http://www.canadians.org/media/fair-elections-act-legal-case-could-call-question-validity-upcoming-election>

Looking ahead:

Our next BC Seniors Commission Executive Meeting will be a pot-luck luncheon - a fund-raiser to support our Commission's new web site now under construction. All executive members and EDA reps are invited - bring along an appetizer and \$10 - we'll get underway at noon with the executive meeting to follow. Mark the time and place: Wednesday, March 11 - noon - 1033 Marinaside Crescent in Vancouver, just 3 1/2 blocks from the Yaletown - Roundhouse Canada Line station. Please RSVP ken.hardie@telus.net to me so that we'll know how many to expect.

Keep up to date on the activities of the major ABC groups:

- [C.R.U.S.H.](#)
- [Council of Canadians](#)
- [Canadians Deserve Better](#)
- [Operation Maple](#)
- [Lead Now](#)
- [Anything But Conservative in 2015](#)

Feel free to share these weekly updates with your riding executive and others who are following the issues. If you have outreach ideas or photos of events, pass them along!