

Breaking news today with the announcement that Julian Fantino has been shuffled out of the Veterans' Affairs ministry, as PM Harper seeks to bring some calm to issues that have been a constant source of trouble for the Conservatives. In the meantime, the Liberals have attracted a number of former senior military officers to build some equity with both veterans and the military, which have served up a share of troubles for past Liberal governments.

Justin Trudeau acquitted himself well in the traditional year-end media interviews. Among other points, he reiterated his pledge to re-open the Veterans Affairs offices closed by the Tories last year and to reverse the Conservatives' prostitution bill. In one interview with CTV, Mr. Trudeau repeated his pledge to focus on infrastructure investments, in part to generate good-paying middle class jobs. A number of year-end opinion pieces have attempted to analyse the challenges facing the three main parties in the run-up to the election and a few pundits (one of whom consulted psychics) are calling for a Conservative minority. We'll see about that.

By hook or by crook, the federal government is determined to show a surplus in order to support the tax cuts they've announced. At the same time, falling oil prices may make it difficult or impossible for them to keep a number of other promises in advance of the election. Lower oil prices may prove to be a bigger boost to the overall economy because Canadians will have more after-tax dollars for other things. Coupled with a devalued Canadian dollar, cheaper energy may fuel a manufacturing resurgence in Ontario, where Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne will undoubtedly try to use better times to boost federal Liberal fortunes. Today's other breaking news is that PM Harper has announced he will meet with Premier Wynne for the first time in over a year.

We will keep an eye out a new documentary that examines voter suppression and election fraud in Canada (promo clip included in the links below).

Our messages to the public:

(a repeat from late December - the national office will return from the Christmas/New Year's break with new resource material later this week)

Liberals focused on growth for middle class families

Liberals believe that government must not only create the right conditions for economic growth, but also ensure that growth is sustainable and will finally help struggling middle class families.

The Conservatives' income splitting plan favours the wealthy, is bad for growth, and is bad for the middle class. Middle class families should not have to pay to give families like the Prime Minister's a \$2,000 tax break.

This week, Justin Trudeau sent [a letter](#) to Finance Minister Joe Oliver outlining the need for Budget 2015 to help middle class families.

Mr. Trudeau is offering a bold vision for Canada. His priority is clear: we must bolster the strength and prosperity of middle class Canadians, who have not had a decent raise in 30 years. Canadian families deserve a real and fair chance at success.

Items of interest from the news and the party:

-Julian Fantino is out as Veterans Affairs Minister:

http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harper-replaces-julian-fantino-as-veterans-minister/article22291591/?click=sf_globefb

...but still in cabinet to help protect Conservative seats in the Toronto area:

<http://www.hilltimes.com/news/news/2015/01/05/pm-harper-keeps-fantino-in-cabinet-because-tories-cant-afford-to-lose-seats-in-gta/40626>

-The Prime Minister agrees to meet with Ontario Premier Wynne:

http://www.thestar.com/news/queenspark/2015/01/05/stephen_harper_finally_agrees_to_meet_kathleen_wynne.html

-The Liberals are attracting former military officers as candidates in a bid to chart a different course from the Conservatives....and improve on their own past performance

<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/liberals-hope-to-escape-past-chart-new-future-with-military-candidates>

-Liberals will be the ruination of Canada -- so said the Fraser Institute in 2014:

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jason-clemens/liberal-party-policy_b_4860241.html

-Voter suppression as an election tactic may be here to stay, and we shouldn't be surprised at another round of fraudulent Robocalls according to a new investigative documentary:

<http://vimeo.com/108236106>

-The challenge of a disappearing surplus -- Conservatives are sliding toward a deficit:

http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/12/31/prospect_of_deficit_threatens_conservative_governments_best_laid_plans.html

-Another less-than-flattering book on PM Harper's communication style is coming out, this time from Ottawa Press Gallery veteran Mark Bourrie:

<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/harper-the-message-and-canadian-democracy>

Much more can be found on our Seniors Commission Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bclibs/>

Looking ahead:

The Liberal calendar is packed with events right across the country: <http://events.liberal.ca/Event-List.aspx>