

Reading the lines, and between them, in the various commentaries this past week, one might sense some shifting taking place. As mused upon in this space last week, the original public support for Bill C-51 and terrorism talk in general seems to be eroding. Opposition to the Bill was high profile and the constant barrage of criticism from a broad range of observers seems to have finally registered with the public. More recent polls show support falling from around 70% to under 50%, with more nuanced concerns about the lack of oversight of the new powers for CSIS and other government agencies. There may also be fatigue on the Tories 'fear' storyline, which appears to be a cynical vote-getting strategy to many columnists. There are two moments of reckoning for the Conservatives in the coming weeks, one being the Mike Duffy trial, set for 41 days beginning April 7th and an even bigger one, an examination of Canada's economy with the tabling of a federal budget.

The economic news continues to be foreboding. Lower energy prices have shocked government revenues, particularly in Alberta, while better prices at the pump are not fuelling a lift in consumer spending as Canadians worry about job security and debt loads. Even more damaging, the expected boost to manufacturing from the fall in oil prices and the value of the Canadian Dollar vs. the US may not materialize. Neglect in that sector has resulted in what the Bank of Canada calls 'structural damage' that will not be fixed easily, quickly or cheaply. Many facilities have been shuttered for extended periods with equipment becoming obsolete, in disrepair or taken away.

If one follows the pundits, they muse that the Liberals are being outflanked on the terrorism and Iraq files by the Conservatives and more generally by the NDP on the economy, the Conservative record and various social issues. NDP Leader Tom Mulcair has been stumping across the country with speeches and announcements solidifying the NDP platform. Justin Trudeau's deliberative approach to policy-making and positioning is being painted by some as a sign of weakness, while Stephen Harper's 'damn the torpedoes' blustering is considered a demonstration of his maturity and strength. There has been an increase in the number of articles calling for greater cooperation between the progressive parties, lest vote splitting deliver another win for the Conservatives. With signals from the NDP that they would be open to this, the spotlight has swung to the Liberals, who are said to continue to be cool to the idea.

While seen by many as an intelligent and possibly shrewd strategy, the Liberals' decision to hold back on its election platform until the true state of the economy is known will very likely increase media and public expectation that it will be strong and substantial, thus increasing the pressure on the Party to deliver accordingly.

In spite of the flux at play right now, the Nanos survey is basically unchanged in terms of national support, although the Tories have made significant gains in Quebec, which is starting to look like a tighter, three-way race: <http://www.nanosresearch.com/library/polls/Nanos%20Political%20Index%202015-03-13E.pdf>

Our messages to the public:

Stephen Harper's income splitting is bad for the middle class

Liberals believe that this country needs a new economic plan, and the evidence is mounting daily. Mr. Harper's \$2 billion income splitting plan favours the wealthy, is bad for growth, and is bad for the middle class.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer this week released his report confirming that income splitting will disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Canadians. What's more, the full benefit will typically only go to the wealthiest few.

Canadians want new leadership dedicated to strengthening the heart of our economy: the middle class. They deserve a real and fair chance at success - and that means growing incomes and real job opportunities.

Items of interest from the news and the party:

-The damage to our manufacturing sector is 'structural' with job losses continuing: <http://www.pressprogress.ca/en/post/canadian-manufacturing-jobs-plummet-near-record-low-statistics-canada>

-Pressure is building on the Liberals to cooperate with the NDP and Greens: <http://www.ipolitics.ca/2015/03/22/is-trudeau-just-handing-harper-the-election/>

-The NDP and the Liberals hold the same basic position on Bill C-51 -- don't dump it but fix it if it passes. Now a Conservative MP is calling for the same fixes: <http://www.pressprogress.ca/en/post/video-conservative-mp-disagrees-stephen-harper-c-51-oversight>

-While Justin Trudeau's McGill speech on fear and division continues to have traction, new Conservative legislation to amplify them is drawing international condemnation: <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/if-stephen-harper-is-serious-about-criminalising-barbaric-cultural-practices-then-he-should-arrest-himself-for-even-suggesting-it-10126055.html>

-The Conservatives appear to have snookered the opposition on the plan to expand the Iraq mission:

<http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/03/22/michael-den-tandt-opposition-parties-facing-an-unanswerable-question-on-iraq-mission-extension-if-not-this-then-what/>

-This might be a stretch, but 'Harperism' author, SFU professor Donald Gutstein believes that Stephen Harper is supporting the NO side in Metro Vancouver's transit plebiscite:

<http://www.straight.com/news/803491/stephen-harper-behind-no-campaign-transit-referendum-sfu-prof-says>

-Justin Trudeau 'called it' in his McGill speech:

http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2015/03/23/Trudeau-Calls-Out-Racist-Past/?utm_source=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=230315

-NDP could support a coalition with the Liberals:

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/03/17/npd-leader-tom-mulcaire_n_6888098.html

Looking ahead: --

BC Events below -- for details on all scheduled events, click the 'Events' tab here: <https://www.liberal.ca/get-involved/>

March 23

Change on the Doorstep in North Vancouver, Vancouver Granville & Oakridge

March 24

Coffee Meeting with candidate Terry Beech in Burnaby-North Seymour

Calling for Change in North Vancouver

Change on the Doorstep in Chilliwack-Hope

Calling for Change in Vancouver South, east and west

Pints and Politics in Vancouver Quadra

House meeting in Vancouver Granville, northeast

Kensington Gardens Neighbourhood Party in Burnaby

March 25

Change on the Doorstep in Chilliwack-Hope

House Meeting - Victoria

Change on the Doorstep - North Vancouver

Calling for Change - West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea-to-Sky Country

Calling for Change - Vancouver Granville Northeast

Volunteer orientation - West Vancouver

House meeting - Vancouver Granville, northwest

Pints & Politics - Ladysmith

March 26

House Meeting - Victoria

Change on the Doorstep - Vancouver Granville, northwest

Change on the Doorstep - Vancouver South, west

Change on the Doorstep - Burnaby South, west

Reception at the B.C. Binning House - West Vancouver

March 27

Change on the Doorstep - Courtenay-Alberni

Sukh Dhaliwal Fundraising Dinner - Surrey

March 28

Change on the Doorstep - Burnaby South

Coffee Meeting with Terry Beech - Burnaby North Seymour

Change on the Doorstep - New Westminster-Burnaby

Calling for Change - Vancouver Granville, Oakridge

Change on the Doorstep - Vancouver South, east

Change on the Doorstep - Vancouver Granville, northeast

March 29

Candidate Selection Meeting - Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Calling for Change - Vancouver Granville, northwest

Kamloops-Thompson Cariboo fundraiser at the Terra Restaurant - Kamloops

Finally:

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](#)