

This is shaping up to be an interesting week, leading off with today's by-elections in Yellowhead and Whitby-Oshawa. After the Conservatives enjoyed a lift in the polls due to terrorism-related issues and Canadians' general support for military action in Iraq, to have other polls suggesting the Liberals could wrest the late Jim Flaherty's old riding away from the Tories stretches credibility. Add to that the income-splitting announcement that should play well in both relatively-affluent ridings, a surge in Liberal support would be upsetting for Mr. Harper's party. We should also consider what turned out to be yet another massive fail by the pollsters in predicting results of the Vancouver and (especially) the Surrey municipal elections. Perhaps the biggest problem for polling companies is that while their measure of support may be correct, they have no way to accurately measure voting intention; something on which we as a Commission and as Liberals do have an influence through our campaign efforts to get people to the ballot box.

So, let's take a large grain of salt, cross our fingers and see what happens tonight!

A steady diet of books that disassemble Stephen Harper's philosophical foundation - that free markets should strongly influence government policy - makes one recognize potential new Conservative actions. One item on the front page of today's Globe & Mail is a complaint by China that Canada's immigration policies are hurting their investment in oil fields. This is because Canada requires them to hire Canadians with the expertise to do the work required. Another is an opinion piece in the Hill Times by Brian Crowley of the Macdonald-Laurier Institute (cousin of the Fraser Institute) that proposes expansion of aquaculture and, for all intents and purposes abandoning the current focus on preserving wild salmon stocks. Both items are a signal to the government that current regulations are holding the free market back and, given their track record, we should watch for changes to federal policy to remove these 'obstacles'.

Finally, Canada's largest private sector union, Unifor, is backing away from unconditional support for the NDP, calling instead for 'strategic voting' to unseat Conservatives. A veterans' group is making a similar move.

Our messages to the public:

Economic and Fiscal Update

This week, Finance Minister Joe Oliver delivered the Conservatives' 2014 Economic and Fiscal Update, promoting their over \$2-billion income splitting plan, which will only benefit 15 percent of Canadian households.

It is unfair to ask middle class families to pay to give families like the Prime Minister's a \$2,000 tax break. One Conservative MP, earning \$180,000 per year,

even sent an email to supporters boasting about how good income splitting will be for him.

The Conservatives' income splitting plan favours the wealthy, is bad for growth, and is bad for the middle class. As experts have pointed out, income splitting will only benefit a small minority of Canadians and will not provide any help to 85 percent of households.

We agree with the late former Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty, who said that the Prime Minister's income splitting proposal is unlikely to be very beneficial for the vast majority of Canadians or the middle class. It should come as no surprise that Liberals oppose this policy.

You can view and share the Liberal Party's latest [infographic](#) on income splitting; the Liberal Party's latest [video](#) on income splitting; Mr. Trudeau's [statement](#) on the income splitting announcement; coverage of the Conservatives' income splitting [The Toronto Star](#), [la Presse canadienne](#), [iPolitics](#), [The Globe and Mail](#), [CBC News](#), [La Presse](#) and [Le Devoir](#).

Items of interest from the news and the party:

-Things are getting hot in Whitby-Oshawa in the by-election race - Tories accuse Liberals of 'smear tactics':

http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/11/16/whitby-oshawa-byelection-smear-campaign_n_6167068.html?utm_hp_ref=tw

-Stephen Harper's economic record submitted to critical analysis in the Hill Times and the Ottawa Citizen:

<http://www.hilltimes.com/opinion-piece/politics/2014/08/18/stephen-harpers-record-as-an-economic-manager/39374>

<http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/op-ed-harpers-economic-index-an-8-year-report-card>

-The Toronto Star reports on Unifor's call for 'strategic voting' against the Tories:

http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/09/18/unifor_puts_defeat_of_harper_above_loyalty_to_ndp.html

-The availability and affordability of rental units is a critical piece of the housing issue. This index shows the stress we face in BC and the call for more coherent public policy:

<http://bcnpha.ca/research/rental-housing-index/>

-A heavy read, but an intriguing look at the measures multinationals (in this case, Kinder-Morgan) take to avoid taxes, notably here in Canada:

<http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2014/11/17/Tran-Mountain-Pipeline-Investments/>

As always, you'll find much more on our Seniors Commission Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/bclibs/>

Looking ahead:

Polls are now open for the Whitby-Oshawa and Yellowhead by-elections.