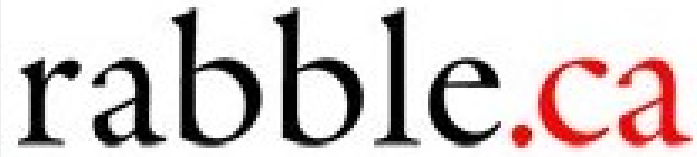


COUNCIL OF CANADIANS ON RECENT FEDERAL ELECTION

Posted on May 6, 2011 by Keghart

The logo for rabble.ca, featuring the word "rabble" in a black serif font and ".ca" in a red sans-serif font, centered between two light gray rectangular bars.

Category: [Opinions](#)



✘ ✘ Brent Patterson, Political Director, [Council of Canadians](#), [rabble.ca](#),

6 May 2011

In her post-election commentary, Council of Canadians chairperson [Maude Barlow](#) writes, "The 2011 federal election was historic in many ways and most of us are still trying to process the outcome. It is crucial that we pause to reflect on its meaning and think carefully about the next steps we must take."

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Parliamentary Opposition

In terms of the 102 seats now held by the New Democrats, [Judy Rebick](#) in her post-election commentary on [rabble.ca](#) says, "An NDP opposition...gives social movements much more voice in Parliament." And Barlow says, "The presence of an opposition with a clear progressive agenda on trade, social and environmental justice and public services will create the opportunity for unparalleled (until now) collaboration between Members of Parliament and progressive civil society." The Council of Canadians, while maintaining its non-partisanship, is committed to working with the parliamentary opposition, including the NDP, Green MP Elizabeth May, and the more-progressive of the Liberal MPs elected.

Extra-Parliamentary Opposition

[Duncan Cameron](#) suggests in his [rabble.ca](#) column, "The results must spur a new wave of democratic action by social movements. The main challenge is to the trade union movement. The public sector will be the main target of the Conservatives. ...The trade union fight back has to begin with creating broad alliances across society with youth, senior, and women's groups. ...The response must come from an energized trade union movement, which must reclaim ownership of democratic debate and discussion in Canada."

Rebick comments, "For too long, progressive social groups and unions have relied on old tactics and old methods, talking to each other." She recommends, "We need strong extra parliamentary movements that rely on the kind of grass roots mobilization we saw during the election since state funding will no longer be available for anyone who is really challenging the government. ...We need to link up with the most vulnerable people in society who are mostly racialized in the big cities and live in places like the 905 around Toronto." And she highlights, "Building much broader support for and profile to the Indigenous struggles to defend their land against the tar sands, mining and clear cutting will also be key. The environmental and social justice movements are coming together

globally through initiatives like the Cochabamba Accord and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth. Environmental destruction and its defence internationally will continue to be a major feature of the Harper government."

[Alice Klein](#) in her rabble.ca blog cautions, "Traditional politics is full of dislike and name-calling, on the left especially. The job ahead is too big for that. We need to build a tradition of appreciation and make space for those with common values to do their different work. That was a hallmark of how many of us worked together during the campaign. ...Given that we don't hold the money or the power, learning and co-operation are our best options for stepping up to the tough challenges of this new time."

And Barlow says, "What is needed now is a coming together of progressive forces in civil society and the labour movement as never before in our country's history. Social and trade justice groups, First Nations people, labour unions, women, environmentalists, faith-based organizations, the cultural community, farmers, public health care coalitions, front line public sector workers, and many others must come together to protect and promote the values that the majority of Canadians hold dear. ...(Our task is) to work hard over the next four years...and prepare the way for the kind of government in four years that does in fact, express the will of the people - one with an agenda of justice and respect, of care for the earth, of the more equitable sharing of our incredible bounty."

The Council of Canadians is committed to participating in a much-wider and much-stronger civil society response to the Harper agenda, and see our grassroots chapter base in seventy communities across the country as a key part of this.

Next steps for us

We are beginning to consider:

1. This month, holding meetings with a range of grassroots and civil society groups, including union leaders, in order to share thoughts and strategies on the best steps forward; as well as continuing to communicate -- through blogs, and perhaps an open letter or video -- on the consensus that may be developing; we would also be seeking to meet with MPs and staff representing the parliamentary opposition;
2. In May/June, looking toward the new sitting of the House of Commons (expected on May 30), the naming of the new cabinet, a Speech from the Throne, and the reintroduction of a federal budget as key political moments, as well as taking note of the Conservative Party policy convention (June 9-11) in Ottawa;
3. In June, re-examining our own campaigns -- so that they continue to include both a strong critique and a positive vision -- and agreeing upon an action plan;
4. In September or the early fall, consulting with our membership and proposing strategies to counter this new political reality (our last virtual town hall by telephone brought together more than

20,000 of our members),

5. In October, building our alliances in Quebec through our annual general meeting/ conference in Montreal, and perhaps launching a paper -- on an inclusive civil society consensus, if it emerges -- on this occasion.

