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Defence Minister Peter MacKay drops into a two-day CF boot camp at Petawawa. p. 2



CLIMATE CHANGE

Jim Prentice, politicians and environmentalists on climate change. pp. 15-30

IGNATIEFF

Ignatieff's high-stakes move could end his career, but he had no choice. Exclusive Angelo Persichilli p. 4



THE HILL TIMES

TWENTIETH YEAR, NO. 1004

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSWEEKLY

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2009 \$4.00

Next federal election trigger likely to happen after G20, not before: insiders

If the government's not defeated in the first week, the Libs will have other opportunities this month.

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

Despite a potential election trigger which some say could come as early as the day Parliament returns on Sept. 14 through a confidence vote on a "ways and means" motion to implement the home renovation tax credit, it's unlikely that the government will be defeated before it tables its budget progress report the week of Sept. 28.

In his second meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama, Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, Alta.) will head to

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RIM met 11 times with senior government officials, three Cabinet ministers

In lead up to the international climate change negotiations, energy and environment issues lobbied with Cabinet ministers and MPs.

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

The head of Waterloo, Ont.-based hi-tech company Research in Motion and his lawyers met 11 times with senior governmental officials and three Cabinet ministers between March

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Photograph by Jake Wright, The Hill Times

Let's get the party started: Prime Minister Stephen Harper steps out.

Political parties to focus on crucial 'swing ridings' in economic downturn campaign bid

Conservatives and Liberals to focus on 71 ridings where the margin of victory was 10 per cent or less in last election.

By ABBAS RANA

The governing Conservatives and Liberals, who are in a statistical dead heat in public opinion polls nationally, will focus on the 71 swing ridings where the margin of victory was 10 per cent or less in the last federal election, say pollsters.

"Those are the ridings that are going to determine who wins the next election. Generally, in elections, very rarely do we see, what I'll call, a sea change in regards to incumbents being overturned. Usually, it's 20 per cent of the seats that are realistically in play and 80 per cent are unlikely to really change significantly. So the question is how is the battle going to shape up for those 20 per cent of those seats that all the parties are desperately going to be fighting over," said pollster Nik Nanos of Nanos Research in an interview with The Hill Times.

The four national political parties will focus on their held ridings and on ridings they have a realistic chance of winning.

Given the current economic situation in the country, Mr. Nanos said the political

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Marzolini tells Grits 46% want either a Liberal minority or majority

But pollster Greg Lyle says Tories and Liberals still have not sealed their base.

By ABBAS RANA

Liberal Party pollster Michael Marzolini told the Grits at last week's national summer retreat in Sudbury, Ont., that a total of 46 per cent of Canadians want either a Liberal minority or majority government, compared to 38 per cent who said they want a Conservative minority or a majority

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Cabinet staffers busy compiling briefings in advance of election call

Ministers' offices are also trying to speed up any 'good news' press announcements before a possible fall campaign.

By ABBAS RANA

Senior Cabinet ministerial staffers are busy putting together background information on issues related to their respective departments in an effort to defend themselves in the next election campaign and are working to get as much "good news stuff done" before a campaign is triggered, Conservative sources told Hill Climbers last week.

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Parliamentary Budget Officer still arguing for \$2.8-million increase

Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page is also planning to release all his office's travel and hospitality expenses and all other office expenses on a regular basis.

By CYNTHIA MÜNSTER

Canada's Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page is still arguing for his \$2.8-million budget and permanent staff and is looking into releasing on a permanent basis all his office's travel and hospitality expenses as well as all other office expenses on the PBO website, according to a leaked copy of his draft response to the Joint Library of Parliament Committee.

Last week, the office sent the 19-page draft response to chairs and co-chairs of the committees that it is legislated to work for, the Senate and House Finance committees and the Public Accounts Committee, opposition Finance critics, Parliamentary Secretary to the Finance Minister Ted Menzies (MacLeod, Alta.) and MPs who have worked with the office before, such as NDP MPs Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, Ont.) and Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.). Mr. Page has presented the report to Parliamentary Librarian William Young, who he reports to, in person last month. The Parliamentary Budget Officer will send the final response to the Library of Parliament Committee once it has received feedback from the other committees and MPs.

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NEWS

Political parties to focus on crucial, marginal 'swing ridings' in economic downturn

Conservatives, Liberals to focus on 71 ridings where margin of victory was 10 per cent or less in last election.

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parties are unlikely to target certain demographic or voting blocks in the next campaign. Using the example of the Conservative Party, he said that they will identify certain winnable ridings across the country and then will focus on those specific ridings.

"In an economic downturn, the polling suggests that demographic factors such as race, gender, and age actually don't have as much of an influence on voting behaviour when there's an economic downturn as opposed to times when things are prosperous. The parties are just going to focus on marginal swing ridings," said Mr. Nanos. "For the Conservatives, they're just going to be looking at the electoral map and thinking where can we pick up another 10 seats, not how are we going to appeal to women or middle aged men. It's going to be much more focused and strategic where the Conservatives are just going to pick a limited number of seats, holding what they have and then picking a limited number of seats to put them over the top. That's an attainable strategy for the Conservatives. It's actually quite manageable considering the resources that they have."

Out of the 71 MPs who won by 10 per cent or less nationally in last year's federal election, 26 are Conservative, 20 Liberals, 12 NDP, 12 Bloc Québécois and one Independent MP André Arthur, who eked out a narrow victory by a margin of 1.5 per cent of the vote.

Ontario elected 28 MPs who won by a margin of 10 per cent or less, Quebec 17, British Columbia 11, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick each elected three MPs, P.E.I. and Manitoba each elected two MPs and Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan each elected one MP. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut each have one riding and both were elected with a margin of less than 10 per cent of the vote.

In interviews last week, pollsters said that based on the polls last week, it's reasonable to assume that Canadians will elect another minority Conservative or a Liberal government, but added that it's still too soon to make any substantive predictions.

"The outcome is going to be close. How close it's going to be, we don't know yet," said Greg Lyle, managing director of the polling firm Innovative Research Group in Toronto, told *The Hill Times*.

Mr. Lyle said one of key factors to play a role in the next election is how the Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Ont.) is defined to Canadians.

"The big issue, in terms of how close the election is going to be is: who gets to define Ignatieff. Does Ignatieff get defined by the Liberals or by his opponents," said Mr. Lyle.

The federal Conservatives ran six English and French TV and online

attack ads against Mr. Ignatieff across the country in May and June. The multi-million-dollar ads attacked Mr. Ignatieff's commitment to Canada and suggested that Mr. Ignatieff is "just visiting" because he returned to Canada, after spending 34 years in the U.S. and Great Britain, just to be Prime Minister. The ads said if Mr. Ignatieff fails to win power, he'll leave Canada again.

The Liberals will release their own TV ads after Labour Day projecting a positive image of Mr. Ignatieff whose message is "We can do better."

Meanwhile, one Tory source told *The Hill Times* that considering the outcome of the next election is highly likely to be close, the Conservatives will focus on issues to target specific voter groups to win the next election. The source cited the example of the home-renovation tax credit issue.

According to the Department of Finance website, the home renovation tax credit "will provide up to \$1,350 in tax relief, reduce the cost of renovations for an estimated 4.6 million Canadian families." This tax credit is available only if the renovation cost exceeds \$1,000 and up to a maximum of \$10,000 worth of work or materials.

MPs are expected to vote on the tax

credit issue soon after they return for the fall House session on Sept. 14. Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) announced last week that his party won't vote against the tax credit which means that even if the New Democrats and the Liberals vote against it, the bill will be passed unless Tories attach some item to the bill deemed unacceptable to all the opposi-

tion parties.

Currently, Conservatives hold 143 seats in the House, the Liberals 77, the Bloc 48, and the New Democrats have 36. There's one Independent MP and three vacancies. To defeat the Harper government, the three opposition parties will have to vote together, but to survive confidence votes, the Conservatives need the support of only one opposition party.

A Canadian Press-Harris Decima poll of 1,000 Canadians released in June indicated that "more than one in three Canadians plan to take advantage of the federal government's home-renovation tax credit."

Meanwhile, should the Harper government be defeated on the tax credit bill, according to a list put together by popular website Pundits' Guide for *The Hill Times*, there are 13 unheld Tory ridings across the country with the highest percentage of home ownership that the Tories are highly likely to target. Of these, six are Ontario ridings, five are B.C., one in Alberta and one in North-western Territories.

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The Hill Times

Potential unheld-Tory target ridings based on home renovation tax credit

Ridings	MPs
1. Mississauga South, Ont.	Liberal MP Paul Szabo
2. Mississauga-Brampton South, Ont.	Liberal MP Navdeep Bains
3. Kingston and the Islands, Ont.	Liberal MP Peter Milliken
4. Nipissing-Timiskaming, Ont.	Liberal MP Anthony Rota
5. Welland, Ont.	NDP MP Malcolm Allen
6. Markham-Unionville, Ont.	Liberal MP John McCallum
7. Vancouver Quadra, B.C.	Liberal MP Joyce Murray
8. New Westminster-Coquitlam, B.C.	Vacant
9. Nanaimo-Cowichan, B.C.	NDP MP Jean Crowder
10. British Columbia Southern Interior, B.C.	NDP MP Alex Atamanenko
11. Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca, B.C.	Liberal MP Keith Martin
12. Edmonton-Strathcona, Alta.	NDP MP Linda Duncan
13. Western Arctic, N.W.T.	NDP MP Dennis Bevington

Source: Pundits' Guide

The 71 closest races in the country on Oct. 14, 2008:

	Liberal	Cons.	NDP	Lead
Newfoundland and Labrador				
St. John's South-Mount Pearl	43.3%	12.6%	40.3%	3.0%
Prince Edward Island				
1. Egmont	43.6%	44.0%	9.0%	0.4%
2. Malpeque	44.2%	39.3%	9.7%	4.9%
Nova Scotia				
1. Dartmouth-Cole Harbour	39.5%	22.5%	31.5%	8.0%
2. South Shore-St. Margaret's	23.7%	36.1%	33.7%	2.4%
3. West Nova	36.1%	39.9%	16.9%	3.8%
New Brunswick				
1. Miramichi	37.0%	42.0%	17.2%	5.0%
2. Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe	38.5%	35.8%	16.7%	2.7%
3. Saint John	38.1%	39.5%	16%	1.4%
Quebec				
1. Ahuntsic	38.8%	10.4%	9.0%	39.1%
2. Alfred-Pellan	29.1%	16.3%	12.0%	38.9%
3. Beauport-Limoulu	14.4%	36.7%	12.2%	32.6%
4. Brome-Missisquoi	32.8%	18.7%	9.0%	35.2%
5. Brossard-La Prairie	32.4%	18.8%	12.8%	32.6%
6. Chicoutimi-Le Fjord	13.5%	35.0%	7.8%	41.2%
7. Gatineau	25.4%	16.8%	26.1%	29.1%
8. Jeanne-Le Ber	32.3%	11.2%	15.7%	34.7%
9. Laval	28.1%	18.0%	12.5%	37.8%
10. Louis-Hébert	23.6%	28.2%	9.3%	36.2%
11. Haute-Gaspésie-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia	35.6%	13.8%	4.7%	45.4%
12. Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou	18.4%	30.4%	8.2%	39.6%
13. Outremont	33.1%	10.5%	39.5%	12.6%
14. Papineau	41.5%	7.6%	8.8%	38.6%
15. Portneuf-Jacques-Cartier	16.3%	-	12.7%	32.0%
16. Roberval-Lac-Saint-Jean	10.1%	43.6%	4.7%	39.5%
17. Saint-Lambert	28.5%	15.8%	14.5%	37.6%
Ontario				
1. Ajax-Pickering	44.3%	37.9%	9.2%	6.4%
2. Beaches-East York	40.9%	17.1%	32.2%	8.7%
3. Bramlea-Gore-Malton	45.0%	37.2%	12.0%	7.8%
4. Brampton-Springdale	40.9%	39.3%	11.7%	1.6%
5. Brampton West	40.2%	40.0%	13.6%	0.2%
6. Brant	33.1%	42.0%	17.2%	8.9%
7. Eglinton Lawrence	44.0%	38.8%	8.5%	5.2%
8. Haldiman-Norfolk	32.2%	40.8%	11.5%	8.6%
9. Kenora	31.8%	40.3%	23.2%	8.5%
10. Kingston and the Islands	39.1%	32.5%	17.5%	6.6%
11. Kitchener Centre	35.9%			
12. Kitchener Waterloo	36.7%			
13. London North Centre	39.1%	33.0%	14.7%	6.1%
14. London West	35.4%	39.1%	14.6%	3.7%
15. Mississauga-Erindale	42.2%	42.6%	8.5%	0.4%
16. Mississauga South	44.1%	39.7%	8.8%	4.4%
17. Mississauga-Streetsville	45.6%	35.8%	9.9%	9.8%
18. Oak Ridges-Markham	41.5%	42.1%	9.4%	0.6%
19. Ottawa-Orléans	38.7%	44.8%	10.1%	6.1%
20. Parkdale-High Park	43.0%	12.4%	36.0%	7.0%
21. Sault Ste. Marie	16.8%	37.7%	40.5%	2.8%
22. Sudbury	30.2%	25.8%	35.1%	4.9%
23. Thornhill	39.4%	49.0%	6.6%	9.6%
24. Thunder Bay-Rainy River	32.3%	23.6%	40.3%	8.0%
25. Thunder Bay-Superior North	28.3%	26.8%	37.0%	8.7%
26. Trinity-Spadina	35.1%	13.7%	40.9%	5.8%
27. Welland	28.0%	32.0%	33.0%	1.0%
28. York Centre	43.5%	37.9%	12.0%	5.6%
Manitoba				
1. Elmwood-Transcona	6.7%	40.5%	46.0%	5.5%
2. Winnipeg South Centre	42.3%	36.3%	14.1%	6.0%
Saskatchewan				
Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar	4.4%	45.4%	44.4%	1.0%
Alberta				
Edmonton-Strathcona	9.1%	41.6%	42.5%	0.9%
British Columbia				
1. Nanaimo-Cowichan	7.4%	37.6%	45.2%	7.6%
2. Newton-North Delta	36.4%	30.9%	26.1%	5.5%
3. New Westminster-Coquitlam	11.2%	38.8%	41.8%	3.0%
4. North Vancouver	37.3%	42.2%	9.4%	4.9%
5. Saanich-Gulf Islands	39.4%	43.4%	5.7%	4.0%
6. Surrey North	15.0%	39.4%	36.2%	3.2%
7. Vancouver Centre	34.4%	25.2%	21.3%	9.2%
8. Vancouver Island North	4.2%	45.8%	41.4%	4.4%
9. Vancouver Kingsway	29.0%	27.4%	35.2%	6.2%
10. Vancouver Quadra	45.6%	36.9%	8.1%	8.7%
11. Vancouver South	39.5%	37.7%	17.2%	1.8%
Northwest Territories				
Western Arctic	13.6%	37.6%	41.4%	3.8%
Nunavut				
	Liberal	Cons.	NDP	Lead