

Example of essay on the canadian federal election

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



The 2011 elections were instigated by Liberal party leader's motion of no-confidence. While the liberal party seemed to enjoy large support among Canadians, the results of the election would prove them wrong. The results of the party delivered majority to the Conservative while offering NDP the official opposition status. The failure of the liberal party is worth investigating. This analysis is aimed at establishing the mistakes done by the Liberal party and their impact in their campaign. It will deal with the leadership, organization, policy, and funding of the party.

Problems in the Liberal party started in December 2008, when Michael Ignatieff was confirmed as the leader without going through a leadership race. This meant that Ignatieff as a leader did not go through the public scrutiny that accompanies such contestations. The party faced organization, policy and funding problems during the run-up to the 2011 elections. On top of these challenges, the caucus was disunited, and the party leader was seen as " an albatross around its neck" (50).

The party did not have a clear direction as Ignatieff seemed to lack both conviction and direction of his values and views on issues pertaining to the country. This led to his branding by the competitors as a " visitor", which dented his campaign. The national politics and personality of the leaders are intertwined in Canada. Ignatieff suffered greatly because of his personality despite having a great command and understanding of the country's issues. A closer reading of Marland (194) also indicates that strategy is a great weapon for those who use it. Unlike their competitors, the Liberal party was involved in internal wrangling that it lost its main focus. Further, the smear campaigns by its competitors forced Ignatieff to take a defensive position

while the Conservative party was holding grassroots meetings with electorates (Marland, 166).

Ignatieff's inability to organize his party, and his inadequate leadership in policy formulation took a toll on the party's support in its strongholds. The biggest question was on the policy and values adopted by Ignatieff as a party leader and the party in general. The people were not clear on what the party stood for; hence its supporters were disillusioned and easily persuaded to support other parties that seemed to have a direction. The challenges were overwhelming since Ignatieff lacked political experience needed to deal with a competitive environment like the one that ensued in the election of 2011. This adds to the argument that personality is essential to success of a political party. This is complimented by the leader's ability to deal with challenges both inside and outside the party.

The party leadership haphazardly organized the Liberal Express tour meant to popularize the party among the electorates. However, this too seemed to hit a dead end as its rating changed marginally. According to polls conducted prior to January 2011, over 64 percent of Liberals wanted Michael Ignatieff replaced. Efforts to recover from this did not bear fruits. It can be deduced that lack of strong and clear leadership in the Liberal party was preparing the ground for a dismal party performance.

Instead of coming up with a strong response to the smear ad campaign by the Conservative, the Liberals launched lackluster campaign that only served to show Ignatieff's incompetence in political matters (Jeffrey, 54). At first, the Liberal party complained that it did not have money to run ad campaigns like its competitor. The negative perception created around Ignatieff would later

prove too enormous to dispel during the election period. At this juncture, it is evident that Liberal Party lacked funds, organization, and leadership necessary to position it as a strong party capable of forming a minority government.

Lack of policy was the other issue that came out clearly in the run-up to the election. Jeffrey states that the Liberal party maintained its power position because of its ability to reinvent as circumstances changed (57). Their updates would be updated as they changed their leaders, allowing them to remain relevant to issues of the day. Ignatieff failed to come up with his own policies plunging the party into a realm of confusion. Even supporters of Ignatieff's leadership started complaining about "lack of concrete policy agenda" (Jeffrey 59). This discontentment was evident in the 2008-2011 polls (Turcotte 201).

The campaign was another area where luck was not on the Liberal side. NDP was performing badly, and the Liberal leaders did not want to join with them. After the vote of no-confidence, parties went into a campaign mood, and the internet was a big addition to the tools of campaigning. According to Marland, voting in the electoral districts had changed in the advent of the internet – a 24/7 media (167). The Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act demarcates the boundaries of the electoral districts in Canada. The Canada Elections Act governs the campaigning, fundraising, candidate nominations, staffing, election communication, and spending (Marland 168; Clarke, Scotto, Reifler, and Kornberg, 283).

Legislation stipulated that parties that qualified would accrue \$2 annually for each vote they received. This led to a hotly contested race since "bringing

the vote up [was] important because of the election financing” (Marland 168). However, efforts by the Liberal party were thwarted by the strong campaign by Conservatives. Liberals were gaining traction in most places, and they were sure their campaign strategy was working despite Conservative’s strong ad campaign (Jeffrey, 67). However, despite their seemingly large influence, the polls released on April 9 prior to leaders’ debates showed that their rating had not changed as much as they thought (Jeffrey, 67; Clarke et al. 300). They expected a minority government after the Fortieth Parliament, but this was increasingly becoming a farfetched dream. Liberal MPs such as Siobhan Coady were on campaign mode “ and maintained active online presence” (Marland 169) as she focused on winning her seat back.

The tables were turning; after the vote of no confidence against the government, many incumbents in British Columbia retired, leaving more seats to be contested. The Liberals concentrated on dealing with internal matters. Due to lack of funds, they were unable to strategize and act in such a magnitude as did the Conservatives. This contributed to low acceptance of their already unclear policies. According to Marland, the seats left by the retired incumbents offered a great opportunity to increase each party’s triage (170). Competitive seats would require more resources. The parties spent money in hiring workers, communications, sending leaders to visit marginal ridings, support of major candidates, and in competitive races. Conservatives had almost triple the Liberal budget, therefore, they were able to inject more money into these campaigns than could the Liberals. The Conservative party was more disciplined and focused than the Liberal

party (Farney and Malloy 255). After the vote of no-confidence was passed, the conservative party increased its budget campaign. They organized informal meeting in electoral districts and engaged electors on dialogue that were more effective than the debates held on national television (Jeffrey 68). Candidate selection at the party level was mired with controversies despite the high level of scrutiny into their background. This was common in most parties. The leadership of the party worried about the representation of the party's message during the campaign period. Due to these controversies, some people chose to run independently. Others, who chose not to be affiliated with any party, did so in order to raise awareness on issues that would otherwise have not been heard (Marland 172).

Constituency campaigns are a replica of the national duel, representing “ the parties' local sales force” 174. The Conservative party was successful in designing and empowering its constituency contenders to market the party. In areas such as New Westminster and Edmonton, informal meetings were held with electors. The decision to use such “ meetings instead of doing media interviews” proved to be very successful (179). Farney and Malloy talk of this discipline and the ideologies of the Conservative party as some of the factors that led their win in 2011 federal elections. Marland reiterates that Conservative party funds were redistributed to targeted electoral seats. This helped the party to distribute money effectively back to the electoral districts. The internet was also used to raise funds as well as popularizing candidates (189).

Work Cited

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