

YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT WITH ELECTIONS

By Howard Brown

SINCE OUR LAST GLP JOURNAL article, the Canadian political scene has been full of surprises.

Here in Ontario, Patrick Brown, MP, defeated Ontario PC Deputy Leader Christine Elliott, MPP, for leadership of their party. Elliott had the support of 17 of the 28 caucus members as well as former PC Premier Bill Davis, and was a runner-up in the 2009 leadership race won by Tim Hudak. She was a sure bet to win.

Surprisingly, Brown, a 36-year-old lawyer and four-term MP from Barrie, signed up over 40,000 new members. And, on May 9, he defeated Elliott by garnering 62 per cent of the eligible votes.

“With fewer high-profile Conservative endorsements but with more new membership sign-ups, Patrick Brown handily won 83 out of 107 Ontario ridings,” wrote Steve Paikin, host of TVO’s *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*. “He triumphed by understanding leadership campaigns are won in ways big and small, and he cornered the market on both.”

Another surprise in Canadian politics this year was the May 24 election of Rachel Notley as the new premier of Alberta. Notley was elected as the leader of her party only last fall with a caucus of just four of the 87 total members of Alberta’s legislature. Notley’s father, Grant Notley, NDP leader from 1968 to 1984, died in a plane crash when his daughter was 20. Despite the family’s political history, no one expected Notley to win the race.

PC leader and outgoing premier Jim Prentice, a former federal cabinet minister and a former vice-president of CIBC, was widely expected to win the race. The PCs finished with just 10 seats, and the Wildrose Party became the official opposition under another former conservative MP, Brian Jean.

“Welcome to the first day of Alberta’s new government,” Notley told the crowd as she was sworn in as Alberta’s premier. “Today we open up a new chapter in the story of Alberta.”

The message in both of these elections is that you never know what to expect. With a fall federal election set for October 19, 2015, anything could happen.

How does this affect public policy for engineering? Despite the dramatic changes across the country, it’s unlikely the public’s perception on issues related to the regulation of engineering will demand more change.

The federal and Ontario provincial spring budgets were good news for the engineering profession, due to the continued focus on infrastructure issues across the country. The Ontario budget outlined priorities that include such transportation initiatives as The Big Move and GO Rail improvements, as well as a focus on the areas of education, health, energy and justice.



Underdogs Rachel Notley and Patrick Brown have recently shaken up politics as usual in their respective provinces. NDP candidate Notley unexpectedly became premier of Alberta in May, and Brown surged ahead of favourite Christine Elliot to take the leadership of the Ontario PC party.

Under the Moving Ontario Forward plan, over \$31.5 billion will be invested in public transit and critical infrastructure over the next 10 years. The budget has allocated money for developing new transit and improving existing lines, building and expanding schools, and creating new trade centres and court houses.

The national budget indicates the priorities to be fixing the deficit, introducing more benefits for seniors and tax cuts for families. The federal government has also called for new voluntary contributions to Canadian pensions as opposed to requiring increased contributions—an idea proposed by the opposition.

One thing’s for sure: The next several months will be interesting to watch as the Canadian political scene unfolds. Σ

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