

Three parties seeking the same voters

EDITORIAL

If, as now seems likely, the federal Liberals will suffer a fate next October similar to that of their Ontario cousins, at least one factor in the earlier defeat will be absent.

Unlike the governments of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne, which together had ruled for about 15 years, Justin Trudeau's troops have been in charge for a single four-year term, and normally you'd expect them to be around for at least another four years.

That, indeed, seemed to be the case before last February's leak to The Globe and Mail that Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould had been getting a lot of pressure from the Prime Minister's Office to have a criminal case against SNC-Lavalin diverted to a deferred prosecution agreement that would see the firm merely pay a stiff fine for bribing Libyan government officials many years ago.

Recent opinion polls indicate that the SNC-Lavalin affair has left the federal Liberals well behind the Conservatives, to the point where Tory leader Andrew Scheer may well wind up with a majority government holding virtually all the Commons seats west of Ontario.

However, the result from the October election could wind up being remarkably like that in Ontario, with the Tories winning their majority with policies that were opposed by all the other parties.

As we see it, one reason for opinion polls showing Ontario Premier Doug Ford as even more unpopular than Kathleen Wynne was in the days leading up to the Ontario election is that his government is enacting policies that find no support among any of the three opposition parties (NDP, Liberal and Green).

The most recent example is the proposal to tear up an agreement with the owners of the province's Beer Stores so as to see beer sold instead in corner stores. While none of the opposition parties is opposed to having alcohol made available in small stores, they see enormous potential damage coming from governmental action that adds up to confiscation instead of expropriation.

As matters stand, the October election platforms of the Liberal, NDP and Green parties are likely to be fairly similar, all calling for tough action against climate change, some form of pharmacare and action in such areas as child-care expenses and long-term-care facilities.

The Conservatives, meanwhile, will promise to kill the carbon tax, reduce corporate taxation and build new pipelines to both east and west coasts while somehow eliminating the budget deficits in their first term.

And if that is the case and the Tories wind up with about 40 per cent of the votes and 60 per cent of the Commons seats, we shall once again witness a government able to enforce its will on a populace where six of 10 voters opposed its platform.

Although it might be argued that we witnessed the same thing in 2015 when the Trudeau candidates got just 39 per cent of the votes, the fact was that their policies were close to those of the NDP and Green.

And we're left wondering why it was that Mr. Trudeau abandoned his pledge that the 2015 election would be the last in which all the winners would be merely "first past the post."

Although we concur with those who see pure proportional representation (in which each party gets the same share of seats as the proportion of ballots in their favor), we think there's much to be said for having runoff voting in any riding where the winner fails to get at least half of the ballots cast. That would mean that every MP could claim to have the support of a majority of his or her

constituents.