

## Editorial ? Don?t go too Conservative

The Institute for Canadian Values (ICV) is upset and worried that Ontario Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown is going to liberalize the party.

The release issued last week by ICV stated he has promised to liberalize the federal Conservative party. That puzzles us just a bit. Although Brown spent several years as a Conservative MP in Ottawa, he now leads the provincial party. So exactly what impact he's expected to have at the federal level is not clear.

What is clear, however, is that a party wishing to form governments at the federal level in this country had better be prepared to cross spectrums, and that might not be too appealing to the staunch Conservative element in this land.

No matter what our political stripes, we believe most Canadians want a government that is inclusive, and which tries to embrace the wants and desires of as many Canadians as possible. That's not an easy thing to do in a country as vast as this one. We have been hearing about western alienation for years. But we have also heard about troubled times in the Atlantic provinces. And there are still a significant number of people in Quebec who would like to see the country split up. A party that hopes to govern and be inclusive has got to realize and appreciate those differences.

Staunch conservatives out there might not want to hear this, but a Conservative party that wants to be successful has to lean to a certain extent to the left to attract broader support.

There are some who will cite Stephen Harper and the impressive showing he accomplished in the 2011 election to form a majority government. It does seem to demonstrate that Conservatives can stick to their guns and be successful.

But there were two major factors in play in '11 that are not likely to repeat themselves. One was the fact that the Liberals had ineffective leadership under Michael Ignatieff, and that the new Democrats had inspiring leadership under the late Jack Layton.

Besides, was Harper really that impressive? In 2006, his first campaign at the head of the party, he was only able to obtain a minority in the House of Commons, although the Liberals, who had been governing, were mired in scandal. He did a little better in 2008, but it took the leadership dynamics of the two opposition parties to give him a majority in '11.

And look what happened to the Conservatives in 2015, when they had to face a rejuvenated Liberal party with a vibrant and energetic leader.

There is nothing wrong with being conservative. Such a philosophy represents values that are held dear by many Canadians. But as it the case with any political position, some of them are more conservative than others.

There was a time when Conservatives thought they were no longer being represented by their party. That led to the formation of the Reform Party of Canada in the late 1980s and early '90s. But the Reform Party is a memory today. We have to wonder what history books written 50 years from now will have to say about them. Will they be remembered for anything more than splitting the conservative vote in this country and giving Jean Chretien a long-term stay in the Prime Minister's Office?

In time, federal Conservatives are going to pick a new leader. That person, who ever he or she is, will have to be able to draw support from the various areas of the party. And once successful, that leader will have to be able to get support from all over the country; that is if the Conservatives are going to form the government.

There are some conservatives who maintain their party should not get too close to the Liberals. Are these people interested in pleasing themselves, or Canadian voters, who make the decision as to who governs?

And to those who don't want to see a Conservative party lean even a little bit close to the Liberals, we have to wonder if they like what they see in Ottawa now?