

# Liberals unwilling to prop up Harper [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## EXCERPTS

Opposition Leader Bill Graham said he will not be afraid to defeat Prime Minister Stephen Harper's minority Conservative government, even though the Liberal Party will spend much of the year in a leadership race.

Mr. Harper must either accommodate Liberal positions on key issues such as child care and income-tax cuts or turn to the New Democratic Party and Bloc Québécois for support in the House of Commons, Mr. Graham said in an interview with The Globe and Mail.

He placed the onus for avoiding a quick election on the New Democrats and the Bloc, saying they triggered the last election out of political opportunism.

"Other parties will have to decide whether they want to compromise on this, because they're the ones &mdash; the Canadian public very well knows &mdash; that put us in this position."

Mr. Graham said he believes Canadians do not want to go to the polls again soon, and he recognizes the possible consequences of his warning: "It could lead to an election."

Mr. Harper's party won 124 of the 308 seats in the Commons in the Jan. 23 federal election, but will have 125 members when Parliament resumes because of the defection of Trade Minister David Emerson, who was elected as a Liberal.

"Mr. Harper is not a majority government," Mr. Graham said. "So he has to accept the fact that he's in a position that has to look for accommodations if he wants to continue to be the government of Canada."

He said the Liberals intend to push their vision of child care &mdash; transfers to provinces to create subsidized daycare spaces &mdash; over the Conservative plan to send monthly cheques to parents.

He sharply criticized the NDP, which now says it will propose a subsidized plan in the coming session of the Commons, saying the New Democrats killed such a plan by forcing the election.

"To some extent, I'm admiring of the chutzpah of it," he said. "But in other respects I'm astonished that they have the courage to do it."

The Liberals will also oppose Mr. Harper's pledge to cut the GST, if it means a reversal of Liberal government income-tax cuts, he said.

Yesterday, Mr. Graham appointed Jane Stewart, who held three cabinet portfolios under Jean Chrétien, as his chief of staff, citing her experience and her good relations with members of the Liberal caucus, which she chaired from 1993 to 1997, as key qualities for the job.

- reprinted from the Globe and Mail

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

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