

Duceppe won't go easy on Harper [CA-QC] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Boasting that he now holds the balance of power, Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe pledged yesterday to wield it responsibly and to work constructively with Stephen Harper's new Conservative government.

However, Mr. Duceppe made it clear he is also prepared to use his newfound clout against the Tories should they renege on promises they made to Quebecers or propose measures that aren't in Quebec's best interest.

While Monday's election saw the Bloc drop in both seat count and percentage of the popular vote, Mr. Duceppe now finds himself in a far more strategic position than he was in the last Parliament.

Together, the Liberals and New Democrats, both left-of- centre parties, have more seats than the Conservatives -- 132 to 124. If Mr. Harper wants to have Parliament adopt a measure they oppose, he would have to get the backing of the Bloc.

"If the Conservative government doesn't completely fulfil its promises to Quebec, it should know that it will have MPs in front of them, determined to relentlessly defend the interests and values of Quebecers."

Mr. Duceppe said the Bloc will be on guard against any attempt by the Conservatives to make Quebec pay to resolve the fiscal imbalance, to make it pay to clean up environmental damage done by Alberta oil companies or to endanger its day-care system.

- reprinted from the Ottawa Citizen

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