

# Canadians chose a stronger nation [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

Editorial

**Author:** Toronto Star

**Source:** Toronto Star

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 29 Jun 2004

## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Canadians demanded change yesterday, but they rejected the change championed by Stephen Harper and his new Conservative party that would have weakened the federal government, reopened old social battles and charted a risky fiscal course.

That's the message from Prime Minister Paul Martin's unexpectedly strong showing last night, which had the Liberals winning seats in every region of the country.

Rather than moving far to the right, Canadians opted for a socially progressive alternative that will promote medicare, push for a new deal for cities, improve the environment and strive to be fiscally prudent.

At the same time, though, voters across Canada also sent a strong signal to Martin and the Liberals that they are fed up with the corruption, waste and arrogance that has marked their government toward the end of their 11 years in power. For Martin, it was a bittersweet victory. He failed to win a majority, but he averted an election disaster that had been predicted by many pollsters and pundits right up to election day.

As leader of a minority government, Martin now faces the daunting task of making the next Parliament work and avoiding another early election. Canadians will expect the New Democrats to work with him.

The strong showing of the NDP assures Martin that he will have a progressive party on the opposition benches with which he can reach acceptable deals on health care, on a new deal with Canada's cities, on a national child care program, and on affordable housing.

It was a disappointing night for the new Conservative party. The Tories' failure to increase their share of the popular vote and to make a major breakthrough in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces indicates the party's platform of more tax cuts, more government spending cuts and an Americanization of the political system is still widely unpopular.

In the end, though, Canadians got the election result many of them wanted - a Liberal minority. Voters wanted to chastise the Liberals for arrogance, waste and corruption. But they also couldn't accept the Conservatives, whose vision of Canada was out of step with the more moderate views of the vast majority of voters.

Now, Martin must quickly get down to work and deliver the strong, socially progressive government they want.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

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

**Tags:** election <sup>[3]</sup>

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