

Confessions of an Optimistic Green

Ralph C. Martin

Pssst, look behind the piles of news articles declaring the demise of the Green Party of Canada. I'm an optimistic Green and what's more, I want to admit it.

You may ask, "are you naïve?" In defense, I know what happened and viscerally feel Green angst. I left many doorsteps, while canvassing in the 2021 election, chastised and chastened about internal Green Party conflicts. My option of choice was to shift from a grimace to a tentative smile and talk again about environmental prerogatives, at the next door. The Green Party of Canada lost about 2/3 of votes from 2019 to 2021. Hardworking Green candidates and their dedicated teams ended 2021 campaigns with dismal results.

Unfortunately, our leader did not win her seat and is discouraged and resigning after "the worst year of her life." Many are dismayed. Party members are challenged by charges of systemic racism and sexism. Greens grieve the loss of who we understood ourselves to be. Our capacity to function as a party has been compromised and a rebalancing of power and influence, within our party structure, is required.

In other losses, Paul Manly, a classy guy who is exactly the type of MP Canada needs, was defeated. If we had 338 MPs like Paul Manly, Parliament would serve Canadians fairly and equitably with due deference to our abundant environmental heritage. Jenica Atwin, an effective MP of considerable promise, is now carrying a red rather than green banner. Many of us miss her as a colleague.

In spite of previous acknowledgements, hope tugs me forward. The climate agenda is pregnant with political possibilities.

As Andrew Cohen suggests, "[If Mr. Trudeau learns from his mistakes, rallies progressives and puts policy before politics, he can ... find his place in history.](#)" In addition to Elizabeth May and Mike Morrice, there are other committed MPs such as Blake Desjarlais in Edmonton-Griesbach and Steven Guilbeault in Laurier-Sainte-Marie. They could forge a cross-party climate alliance to steer meaningful legislation to enable necessary action.

The carbon pricing court challenge by three provinces was defeated and [the federal government can proceed with national minimum carbon pricing](#). Even the federal Conservative

Party now realizes [their electoral standing was improved](#) with a nod to carbon pricing. And let's not forget the clarion call from Preston Manning, firmly rooted in Alberta politics, [for full cost accounting with respect to energy production](#).

John Kerry, US climate envoy, has the backing of his President to shift the bloated beast of US government to facing, rather than running from, climatic realities. Furthermore, as COP26 approaches, "[China will support other developing countries in developing green and low-carbon energy, and will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad](#)." At the recent Youth4Climate event, "[youth spoke the truth, i.e. more is necessary, and faster](#)." Let's listen and support MPs who will act accordingly.

Parliament needs and has Green MPs. Elizabeth May was re-elected and is still the premier expert in the House of Commons on the climate emergency. She is also a clear communicator with a rolodex, representing relationships around the globe. In an exciting campaign, Mike Morrice was elected in Kitchener Centre. Mike is our underestimated advocate for healthy communities and profitable small businesses. He has an unusual capacity to engage people, who might otherwise feel left out. He knows why and how we can come together in struggles that matter. Together, Elizabeth and Mike will inspire Canadians to act, whether Green or not.

Greens are also heartened by a newly elected [Federal Council](#) with many capable members who are planning ahead. Lorraine Rekmans, member of Serpent River First Nation, is our first Indigenous President of Federal Council. She was the Indigenous Affairs Critic for Shadow Cabinet for over 12 years, has been a Green Party candidate five times and will grace us with her knowledge and suggestions to take practical steps toward Truth and Reconciliation.

In Germany, the Greens are expected to assume more power in a coalition with the Social Democratic Party and the Free Democrats. In Scotland, the Green co-leaders have become ministers in Nicola Sturgeon's government. The Green Party of Canada draws on the experience and success of Green parties around the world.

After a year of setbacks and sadness, some expect Greens to lie down and lick their wounds. During the days at least, we stand and although exhausted, look ahead with cautious optimism, see the work to be done and invite you to participate.

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