

Challenges of the New Millennium



Figure 12.1 After 13 years in the political wilderness, a new Conservative Party, under the leadership of Stephen Harper, ousted the Liberals to form a minority government in 2006. What challenges do you think Harper's government faced?

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Thinking Ahead

As you read in Chapter 10, after Brian Mulroney's success in the 1980s, in 1993 the Conservatives were all but wiped off the political map. For the next 13 years, the Liberal Party ruled the country unchallenged while the Conservatives struggled to regain their identity and their share of public support.

In this chapter, you will discover the twists and turns along the road leading to the rebirth of the new Conservative Party. You will discover the challenges Canada faces in the twenty-first century. As you do, think about these key questions:

- What factors led to the creation of the new Conservative Party?
- What challenges did the Conservative government face?
- Is Canada's commitment to the environment and the Kyoto Protocol achievable?
- Why is Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic an important issue in the twenty-first century?
- Why was Canada's mission in Afghanistan controversial?
- What role should Canada play in the fight against HIV/AIDS?

Profile in Power: Stephen Joseph Harper

“I think Canadians are always behind our troops wherever they go, and I think the more they understand about the mission ... the more support they'll have for the work we're doing here ... Canada is not an island, we live in a dangerous world, and we have to show leadership in that world. That's what we're doing, and that's what I'm trying to do by going to support our men and women.”

—Prime Minister Stephen Harper, “PM makes surprise visit to troops in Afghanistan.” CTV.ca, 13 March 2006



Figure 12.2 Stephen Harper (1959–)

Stephen Harper first became interested in politics as a teenager in Toronto, where he joined the Young Liberals. When he was 19, he moved with his family from Toronto to Calgary, where he attended the University of Calgary and earned a master's degree in economics. In Alberta, Harper's strong opposition to Trudeau's National Energy Program prompted him to shift his political loyalties from the Liberals to the Conservatives. However, Harper soon became disillusioned with the party under the leadership of Brian Mulroney. In 1988, he left the Conservatives to join the newly created Reform Party.

Harper had a keen interest in policy issues. He contributed many ideas to the Reform Party's political platform. In 1993, he was elected to Parliament as the MP from Calgary West. His relationship with party leader Preston Manning grew strained over policies and strategies, however. Harper resigned his seat in 1997 and became president of a conservative lobby group called the National Citizens' Coalition.

In 2000, the Canadian Alliance succeeded the Reform Party. When the new party faltered, Harper became leader of the Canadian Alliance. By May 2002, Harper was leader of the official opposition. He continued his climb up the political ladder in 2003 when the Canadian Alliance

joined forces with the Progressive Conservatives to “unite the right” in a new Conservative Party of Canada. Harper won the race for the leadership of the new party just in time to face Canadian voters in the election of 2004. When the votes were counted, the Conservatives had emerged from more than a decade in the political wilderness, finishing second behind the Liberals.

By the end of 2005, the Liberals were struggling under the weight of scandal. Harper was determined to capitalize on their weakness. He campaigned on a promise of government accountability. His strategy worked. On 23 January 2006, Harper and the Conservatives defeated the Liberals to win a minority government. On 6 February 2006, Stephen Harper became the 22nd prime minister of Canada.

Once in office, Harper quickly followed through on many of his campaign promises, including reducing the GST from 7 per cent to 6 per cent. In October 2007, he reduced the GST yet again, to 5 per cent. Harper continued to carve out the new Conservative vision he had for Canada. He used careful political strategizing to achieve many of his goals, including moving Canada away from its long-held commitment to the environmental targets of the Kyoto Protocol. At the same time, however, he upheld Canada's commitment to human rights, including welcoming the spiritual leader the Dalai



Figure 12.3 Harper's first overseas trip as prime minister was to Afghanistan to visit Canadian troops stationed there on a NATO mission. What message do you think this trip sent to the troops in particular and to the military in general? What did it signal about Canada's foreign policy under Harper?

Lama to the Prime Minister's Office in October 2007. The move drew harsh public criticism from the People's Republic of China, who accused Canada of interfering in China's domestic affairs. (China considers the Dalai Lama to be leading the Tibetan separatist movement.)

By the start of 2008, Harper's minority government had successfully remained in office, relatively unchallenged, for two years. It remained to be seen what challenges the future would bring and how long the new Conservatives would maintain their hold on power.

Responding

1. Why do you think Harper changed political parties so many times?
2. Do you agree with Harper's comments about Canadians' attitudes toward our soldiers? Do you think his statement reflects the opinion of the majority of Canadians? Give reasons for your response.

Reading Strategy

Before you begin reading this section, return to Chapter 11 and review the section on the election campaign of 1993.



Learn more about the Reform Party and Preston Manning

“[Manning sent] a signal to traditional party brokers in Ontario and Québec that the West was capable of producing a formidable party ... The effort to create the Canadian Alliance was an important step along that road.”

—*Vancouver Sun*,
21 October 2003

Rebuilding the Political Right

A new conservative political party was born in Canada’s Western provinces in 1987. The Reform Party, founded by Preston Manning, embraced traditional conservative economic values, such as balanced budgets, social program cutbacks, and deficit reductions. It opposed such liberal social policies as tougher gun laws, abortion, and same-sex marriage.

Reform Strikes a Chord

The Reform Party got off to a slow start. In 1988, when the Conservatives won their second straight majority government, the party failed to elect a single candidate. By 1993, however, Canadians had lost confidence in the Progressive Conservative Party. They delivered them a stunning defeat in the election of 1993, electing only two Conservative MPs across the country. The Reform Party, on the other hand,

had struck a chord with conservative voters—at least in the West. They elected 52 candidates. It seemed that the Reform Party had replaced the Conservatives as the voice of conservatism in Canada.

Manning was determined to build on the party’s success. In 1997, after winning 60 seats in the House of Commons, the Reform Party became the official opposition. Yet the party had still failed to win a single seat east of Manitoba. Reform seemed destined to be a Western regional party. Without support in the east, it had little hope of forming the government in Ottawa.

By 2000, Manning realized his party had run its course. A new and broader coalition was needed to unite conservatives across the country. The Reform Party disbanded and re-emerged under the banner of the Canadian Alliance.

The Canadian Alliance

The transition from the Reform Party to the Canadian Alliance was bitter-sweet for Manning. Although he led the drive to create the Alliance, Manning lost the leadership in July 2000 to Stockwell Day. Like Manning, Day was a social and economic conservative. He was also a popular and media-smart politician. In the early days of his leadership, the Western conservative movement gained new momentum. The Canadian Alliance appeared confident it would surpass the success of the Reform Party in the next election.

Within a year, though, the Canadian Alliance was in disarray. Day hoped to win over moderate conservative voters. Yet his political philosophy, firmly based on socially conservative values, did not appeal to many



Figure 12.4 To many, the success of Preston Manning (shown here speaking with a Toronto commuter) and the Reform Party was as surprising as the collapse of the Conservatives. Why do you think this was so?

Canadians who wanted to maintain Canada's socially progressive policies.

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien decided to capitalize on the Canadian Alliance's troubles by calling an election in the summer of 2000. The Liberals succeeded in portraying the Alliance as a reactionary party that was ill-suited to govern a progressive country like Canada. The Liberals won a majority. The Alliance won 62 seats—two more than Reform had in the previous election. Yet once again they failed to win a single seat outside of Western Canada.

A New Leader

After the election, tensions within the Canadian Alliance mounted as support for Day's leadership crumbled. Several Alliance MPs abandoned the party in protest over Day's leadership. With the party in chaos, Day announced plans to hold a leadership convention to determine his fate.

While Day maintained the support of many social conservatives within the party, economic conservatives had found a new champion—a former Reform MP named Stephen Harper. They believed Harper was more mod-



Figure 12.5 Initially, Stockwell Day was a bright new face in Canadian politics. However, during the election campaign, he made a series of critical errors that made him the subject of ridicule in the media. To what extent do you think the media can influence the way voters view a political candidate?

erate than Day and would attract more voters. They persuaded him to run for the leadership. After winning a decisive victory over Day, Harper took quick action to change the fortunes of the conservative movement in Canada.

Challenge and Response

1. What challenges did the Reform Party face? Why was it unable to overcome them?
2. Why do you think the socially conservative agenda of the Canadian Alliance did not appeal to the majority of Canadians? Explain your response.

“What we’ve got to do is turn this party into an institution. It’s too often been viewed as a popular protest movement or a regional fragment or a leader-centric vehicle or a coalition thrown together for a single election. I think the way to address that is to ... build a permanent professional political institution.”

—Canadian Alliance leader Stephen Harper after winning the leadership, 2000

A New Party, a New Government

Stephen Harper was determined to “unite the right.” In December 2003, he persuaded the new leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, Peter MacKay, to join forces with the Alliance to present a strong and united alternative to the Liberals. The new Conservative Party then had to choose a leader. In 2004, MacKay and Harper both campaigned for the leadership. Harper won.



Figure 12.6 After 13 years of political struggle, Stephen Harper steered the Conservative Party back to power in 2006. With only a minority government, however, there was always the possibility of an early election. What strategies do you think political leaders need to use in minority governments that are different from those they would use if they had a majority?

For the first time in more than a decade, Canada’s Conservatives were united under one party and one leader.

The Conservatives Break Through

As Stephen Harper was making his entrance onto the political stage, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien was preparing to make his exit. After he retired in 2003, his successor, Paul Martin, called an election in 2004. Canadians seemed weary of the powerful Liberal Party. After three successive majorities, the Liberals won only enough seats for a minority government. An opportunity was at hand for the new Conservatives.

On 28 November 2005, the Liberal government fell after losing a motion of non-confidence in the House of Commons. Parliament was dissolved and an election was called for 23 January 2006. Harper and the Conservatives relentlessly pursued the Liberals over the so-called “sponsorship scandal” in which members of the Québec wing of the Liberal Party admitted to misusing government funds. Martin and the Liberals were thrown off balance. They appeared to have lost confidence in their ability to pull an election victory out of the sponsorship fire.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, kept the scandal at the forefront of the campaign. They made accountability one of the key issues in the election and assured Canadians that a Conservative government would not tolerate corruption. They also made some campaign promises that appealed to average Canadians, such as reducing the unpopular GST from 7 per cent to 6 per cent, cracking down on crime, and reducing hospital waiting times.



Michaëlle Jean: A Governor General for the Twenty-first Century

“Canada sent a very powerful signal to the world. One reason I accepted [the position of Governor General] is that I knew how much hope a black woman in this office would bring to people who believe in equity and justice.”

Source: Governor General Michaëlle Jean, “The people’s governor general.” *Reader’s Digest* (July 2007): 57.

Michaëlle Jean was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1957. As a child, she experienced the violence of the dictatorship of François “Papa Doc” Duvalier after her father, a school principal, was abducted and tortured in 1966. In 1968, the family escaped to Canada. They settled in the Québec mining town of Thetford Mines. At school, Jean experienced racism and discrimination, yet she was determined to pursue her education. She earned degrees in languages and literature from the Université de Montréal. Then she earned scholarships to study at three universities in Italy.

In the 1980s, Jean’s work at Québec shelters for battered women marked the beginning of a lifelong commitment to prevent violence against women. She frequently returned to Haiti to document the challenges the people in her impoverished homeland faced. This led to a career as a television journalist with Radio-Canada. In 1992, Jean married Jean-Daniel Lafond, a French filmmaker. In 1999, they adopted their daughter, Marie-Éden, from Haiti.

In 2005, the Queen appointed Jean, on the advice of Liberal prime minister Paul Martin, to be Canada’s 27th Governor General. Her early days in office sparked some controversy as some people accused her of being sympathetic to separatism. She proved them wrong, however, and adopted a personal motto, *Briser les solitudes* (Break the soli-



Figure 12.7 Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, visited the communities of Wunnumin Lake and Mishkeegogamang in northern Ontario in June 2007, in support of literacy education initiatives in Aboriginal communities.

tudes), a reference to the gap that exists between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians.

Jean quickly became a favourite with both the press and the public. Many Canadians and others she met around the world found her engaging, charming, and charismatic. Jean reflected the “face” of Canada in the twenty-first century: an immigrant of African heritage who spoke many languages—French, English, Italian, Spanish, and Haitian Creole—as well as a working mother. As Governor General, Jean connected with young Canadians as well as with people from across Canada’s multicultural population. She reached out to many people in developing countries in Africa and the Caribbean and visited Afghanistan, where she met with Canadian troops as well as with local women and children.

Responding

1. In what ways does a Governor General like Michaëlle Jean reflect Canadian society in the twenty-first century?
2. What signal do you think Canada sent to the world by appointing Jean as Governor General?



Learn more about contemporary Canadian politics

“We’ll see what will happen with the government but we know that Canadians don’t want elections and we’ll continue to do our role as official opposition, explaining why we disagree with the government.”

—Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, speaking about the Speech from the Throne, 25 October 2007

Many Canadians were uneasy about Harper and the new Conservatives. They questioned whether they had a hidden agenda to reverse or change the more socially progressive values of Canadian society reflected in legislation. Many others, though, believed the Liberals had been in power long enough. It was time for a change. On 23 January 2006, the Liberals’ long hold on power in Ottawa ended.

A Wait-and-See Approach

Yet the election did not produce a clear victory for the Conservatives. They won 124 seats, including 10 in Québec, which had been a political graveyard for the party since the end of the Mulroney era. However, they won only 36 per cent of the popular vote, meaning that two out of three people had supported other parties. The Liberals won 102 seats and the NDP 29. The Bloc Québécois won 51 seats—all, of course, in Québec.

The Conservatives also failed to win seats in Canada’s major cities. It seemed that the party’s victory was not an endorsement for either Conservative policies or for Stephen Harper. In electing another minority government, Canadians were signalling that they were taking a cautious, wait-and-see approach to the new Conservatives.

The Liberals Choose a Leader

Their election defeat left the Liberals divided and discouraged. A leadership race began almost immediately as Paul Martin announced his resignation. Many high-profile Liberals who were strong candidates to replace Martin as leader surprised people by deciding not to run. The field was wide open for a host of new candidates. By the time of the leadership convention in Montréal in

late November and early December 2006, however, the real contest was down to four people:

- Michael Ignatieff, an internationally known scholar who returned to Canada from his position at Harvard University to run for the leadership
- Bob Rae, the former NDP premier of Ontario who had joined the Liberals in 2006
- Gerard Kennedy, a former education minister in the Ontario Liberal government
- Stéphane Dion, a former Cabinet minister in both the Chrétien and Martin governments

An Upset Victory

The frontrunner going into the convention was Michael Ignatieff. But in a surprising upset, Stéphane Dion won the leadership on the fourth ballot. Since he had been loyal to both Chrétien and Martin, Dion had distanced himself from the bitter rivalry that divided the Liberals. To help rebuild party solidarity, Dion invited his main rivals to be part of a new Liberal “Dream Team.” He vowed to restore the tarnished image of the Liberal Party and regain the confidence of Canadians.

However, throughout 2007, Dion had difficulty establishing his credibility as Liberal leader. He failed to make significant gains in public opinion polls. Although voters remained uncertain about many Conservative policies, they did not have confidence in the new Liberal leader.

In October 2007, Harper used the Speech from the Throne to challenge the Liberals to call an election. Dion believed that Canadians did not want a third election in less than four years. As a result, he found himself in a politically



“I know that in politics we have to take perception into account, but you can’t let that stop you. You have to look at your own convictions, and I have the conviction that we will win the next election.”

—Liberal leader Stéphane Dion,
4 December 2006

Figure 12.8 Stéphane Dion had a reputation as a “come-from-behind” politician who frequently exceeded people’s expectations. Do you think there is an advantage to being underestimated? Explain your response.

awkward situation. If he supported the NDP and the BQ in a vote of non-confidence and forced an election, the Liberals might suffer serious consequences at the polls. If they voted with the Conservatives, however, they would be supporting policies they strongly opposed. Dion’s solution was to

acknowledge his party’s opposition to the Throne Speech as well as Canadians’ opposition to another election. The Liberals then abstained from the non-confidence vote over the Speech from the Throne. At the beginning of 2008, governing Canada was still a balancing act for politicians in Ottawa.

Challenge and Response

1. Why do you think Canadians did not clearly choose one party over another in the 2006 election? Explain your response.
2. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of a minority government? Record your ideas in a T-chart.

The Conservative Government on the Home Front

As prime minister, Stephen Harper knew he had the opportunity to rebuild a lasting foundation for the Conservative Party. During its first months in office, his government moved quickly to implement changes. Harper's political opponents were openly hostile to his plans. They knew, however, that Canadians did not want another election. Instead of challenging the new government, the Opposition reluctantly agreed to compromise.

Campaign Promises

The Conservatives quickly followed through on their election promises, including:

- cutting the GST from 7 per cent to 6 per cent, with promises of further cuts
- restricting political lobbying and limiting political donations from corporations and unions
- creating a family allowance of \$1200 a year per child under the age of six
- introducing legislation to deal with violent crime
- initiating discussions with the provinces over health care

Many Canadians supported these initiatives. However, some of Harper's decisions drew sharp criticism from both his opponents and from some members of his own party. When Harper appointed an unelected Conservative party organizer from Québec and a Liberal MP from Vancouver to his Cabinet, critics accused him of violating his party's own position on government appointments. Harper defended his actions by claiming that the government was under-represented in Québec and British Columbia. Therefore, the appointments gave the provinces a greater voice in government.



Figure 12.9 Harper promised tough new legislation to deal with violent crime, but he opposed tighter gun controls. Following a deadly shooting at Montréal's Dawson College in 2006 and several more shootings across Canada in 2007, more and more Canadians began demanding tighter gun controls. Harper still refused. Why do you think governments should do to reduce gun violence?

Broken Promises

On the campaign trail, Harper had promised not to increase taxes paid on **income trusts**. Once in office, however, he reversed his position and increased the taxes. He justified his decision by claiming that the trusts were expanding too quickly and the government was losing much-needed tax dollars. The political fallout was felt across the country, including in the Conservative stronghold of Western Canada. Critics charged that Harper was violating his own pledge of government accountability by reversing a campaign promise. The Toronto Stock Exchange plummeted. Investors suffered massive losses.

Harper had also campaigned on a promise to reform the Senate. He wanted to pave the way to create an elected Senate in Canada. Many constitutional experts, however, warned the prime minister that attempting to reform the Senate would open the door to yet another constitutional crisis. After the divisive battles over the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords, many Canadians did not want to tread into the murky waters of constitutional reform again.

A National Disabilities Act

During the election campaign, the Conservatives promised to introduce a national disabilities act to promote access to medical care and equipment as well as equal opportunities in education, employment, transportation, and housing for Canadians living with disabilities. Once in office, however, the rights of persons with disabilities jostled for priority with other issues on the government's agenda. Groups such as the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) urged the government to act to address access issues under federal jurisdiction, such as transportation, telecommunications, and new technologies. They appealed to both federal and provincial governments to address other disability issues, such as poverty, unemployment, and housing.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Canada and its disability organizations played a leading role drafting the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In December 2006, however, the Conservative government stated Canada would not sign the convention. In response, the Council of Canadians with Disabilities,



Figure 12.10

In July 2007, David Onley, a Toronto television journalist, became the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. He pledged to use his position to promote greater accessibility for the 2 million Canadians living with disabilities.

“In the developed world, where the life expectancy is 70 years or older, the average person lives eight years of their life with a disability.”

–Jim Derksen, CCD,
13 December 2006

the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC), the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL), Amnesty International, and over 40 other organizations wrote to the prime minister urging the government to change its position. Their lobbying worked. On 30 March 2007, Canada signed the Convention at the official ceremony at the United Nations. The Convention marks a historic step in ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate fully in society and can contribute fully to their communities.

A Nation within a Nation

On 22 November 2006, Harper surprised both Parliament and the people of Canada when he introduced the following resolution in the House of Commons: “This House recognizes

“This historic international human rights document creates a framework for persons with a disability worldwide to dream and to achieve for the betterment of their lives, their family, and their community.”

–David Shannon, chair, CAILC
Social Policy Committee, 2007



Learn more about disability issues in Canada



Canadian Paralympians

After the Second World War, sports became a form of therapy to enhance the quality of life for people who sustained injuries, such as the loss of a limb, during the war. An English neurosurgeon organized the first International Wheelchair Games to coincide with the 1948 Olympics. His goal was to establish a global competition for Paralympians to be held alongside the Olympic Games every four years. The first Paralympic Games were held in Rome in the summer of 1960. In 1976, the Paralympics expanded to the Winter Olympic Games when the first Winter Paralympics were held in Örnköldsvik, Sweden.

Canada has competed in every Paralympic Games since 1968. Today, Canadian athletes have emerged as a powerhouse in the Games. At the Winter Paralympics held in Torino, Italy, in 2006, Canada finished in sixth place. At the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games in 2010, Canadian Paralympic athletes hope to finish in third place—or better!

Paralympic athletes compete in many different sports. The winter games include alpine, slalom, and cross-country skiing, as well as curling and sledge hockey. The summer games include rugby, basketball, swimming, and shooting. Events are organized under five categories—amputee, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, visual impairment, and other—to allow athletes to compete regardless of their level of physical functioning.

Canada's Paralympians travel to schools across Canada to motivate, educate, and inspire students not to give up the pursuit of their dreams. They serve as role models for overcoming life's challenges.



Figure 12.11 In 2007, The Royal Canadian Mint issued a 25-cent coin depicting wheelchair curling to commemorate the Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2010. It is the first-ever circulation coin issued by a mint in honour of the Paralympic Games.

“Our Canadian Paralympians embody the true spirit of amateur sport. Through sport, the Paralympics empower people with disabilities and enrich their lives.”

Source: Dr Gaetan Tardiff, “Celebrating Canada’s Olympians.”
Toronto Rehab: eMagazine (Fall 2004).

“True champions continually renew their commitment to excellence, their eyes fixed on new challenges and never content to dwell on past victories.”

Source: Canadian Paralympian Chantal Petitclerc,
Chantalpetitclerc.com, 31 January 2005.



Learn more about Canada’s Paralympians

Responding

1. Why do you think it was significant to commemorate the Paralympic Games?
2. What barriers, either physical or social, are there for persons with disabilities in your school? Identify specific areas in your school where better accessibility is needed and present your findings to the school.

that Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.” The move was intended to defuse a motion by the Bloc Québécois calling for the recognition of Québec as a nation. The key difference between the two resolutions was that the Bloc did not include the words *within a united Canada* in their motion.

Harper stressed that the resolution was symbolic and did not give Québec any special political or legal status. The Liberals and New Democrats supported the Conservatives and voted in favour of the resolution. However, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, Gilles Duceppe, maintained that Harper was refusing to recognize Québec for what it was. Nevertheless, he vowed to use the motion to get the federal government to address Québec’s concerns.

The Sovereignty Debate

In June 2007, the issue of sovereignty, which had dominated Québec politics for two generations, appeared to be losing steam. It seemed the people of Québec had grown tired of the debate since the federalists narrowly won the last referendum in 1995. In the provincial election of 2007, the Parti Québécois placed third behind the Liberals and a new conservative party called Action Démocratique du Québec. A poll suggested that 68 per cent of Quebecers wanted the PQ to drop the issue of independence and focus instead on gaining more power for the province within Confederation. Another poll in June 2007 indicated that the majority of Quebecers believe that sovereignty is “highly or totally improbable.”

Progress and Protest

When the Conservatives took office, many complex Aboriginal land claims disputes were still outstanding. At first, the relationship between the Harper



Figure 12.12 Polls indicated that the majority of Canadians in English Canada do not recognize the Québécois as a nation. Given this opposition, why do you think the Liberals and the New Democrats joined forces with the Conservatives to support the resolution?

government and the Aboriginal community did not appear promising. In 2006, the Liberals and Aboriginal leaders had signed the Kelowna Accord. It promised \$5 billion over five years for education, housing, and health care in Aboriginal communities. At the time, Harper had denounced the deal. Now that he was in office, Aboriginal leaders were concerned whether he would honour the agreement.

At first, Harper indicated his government accepted the accord in principle. However, he refused to be bound by any terms since few details had been worked out and no measures had been passed by Parliament. When the Conservatives issued their first budget, there was no money allocated to meet the obligations of the Kelowna Accord. Aboriginal leaders responded with disappointment and concern. In March 2007, the House of Commons passed a resolution demanding that the government honour the agreement.

“In Québec, the French word ‘nation’ means a collectivity bound by a common history, a common language, and a common culture. In English Canada it means a nation-state, an independent country, with a right to sovereignty in international affairs...”

—Errol Mendes, law professor,
University of Ottawa,
30 November 2006

“Do Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada? The answer is yes. Do the Québécois form an independent nation? The answer is no, and will always be no.”

—Prime Minister Stephen
Harper, 22 November 2006

ISSUES



Québec as a Nation

Reading Strategy



According to *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, a *nation* is:

- a community of people of mainly common descent, history, language, etc., forming a state or inhabiting a territory
- the state or territory itself
- a group of Aboriginal people with common ancestry who are socially, culturally, and linguistically united

Think about these definitions as you read this Issues feature and consider the points of view expressed by Canadians.

The issue: Is Québec a nation within Canada?

Many Canadians were unclear about the significance of the government's decision to recognize the Québécois as a nation. They wondered what the declaration might mean for the future of Canada–Québec relations. Canadians from all backgrounds and from all parts of the country expressed their points of view.

"I'm tired of hearing people talk about Québec as just another part of Canada. It is not, we do not share the same history, language, values, religion, ancestry as the rest of Canada. There are more differences between Quebeckers and Canadians than there are between Canadians and Americans. To compare Québec to the rest of the provinces is utterly ridiculous. Why should we be treated differently? Because we are different."

Source: A Quebecker, CTV News Politics Blog, 29 November 2006.

"We should recognize Québec as a unique and distinct nation within our country ... If India can have 800+ languages and every different religion living densely packed in the subcontinent, surely we can survive a couple of unique cultures within our sparsely populated, wide-open spaces."

Source: Giri Puligandla, "Your view." CBC News Online, 23 November 2006.

"I am glad that ... a few people have picked up on the fact that Mr. Harper only mentioned the Québécois, NOT Québec, NOT Quebeckers. I am a Quebecker ... but by no stretch of the imagination do I expect the Québécois to accept me as part of their nation."

Source: Elizabeth Saunders, "Your view." CBC News Online, 24 November 2006.

"Referring to Québec as a 'nation' is ... excluding French Canadians who live all across the country. Should they be left out because they do not live in *la belle province*?"

Source: Drew Adamick, "Your view." CBC News Online, 23 November 2006.

"I don't think that Québec deserves any more recognition than any other distinct culture that exists within Canada. We are a country of immigrants and none deserves to be elevated above others ... There is one Canada, one nation, one people..."

Source: Joey Carr, New Brunswick, CTV News Politics Blog, 23 November 2006.

"There is no satisfactory definition of what makes a 'Québécois.' Can an Arab be a Québécois? A First Nations person? An Asian? ... The answer is no..."

Source: Erik Ruisseaux, Gatineau, Québec, "Your view." CBC News Online, 23 November 2006.

"Under no circumstances should the recognition of the Québécois be achieved by putting the historical and constitutional status of First Nations at risk."

Source: Chief Phil Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations, Canoe.ca, 5 December 2006.

"Nation of Québec—no problem at this end ... Signed the Empire of Alberta."

Source: John Wardrop, Calgary, Alberta, "Your view." CBC News Online, 23 November 2006.

Responding

1. In a T-chart, identify the different arguments presented for and against recognizing the Québécois as a nation. Then, highlight those arguments you agree with. Justify your ideas in an informal class debate.

A Day of Action

On 29 June 2007, Aboriginal leaders organized a National Aboriginal Day of Action. They wanted to protest the government's failure to honour the Kelowna Accord and to focus attention on the long-standing issues between Canada and Aboriginal peoples. The Day of Action was intended as a peaceful protest. However, some people wanted to take more dramatic action by blocking roads and railways. To avoid any violent confrontations, rail service was suspended along the busy Windsor–Québec City corridor. For the most part, however, the Day of Action was limited to peaceful marches and demonstrations. Many Canadians, including unions and university students, showed up to express their support for the rights of Aboriginal peoples.



Figure 12.13 Early in 2006, a prolonged standoff began in Caledonia, Ontario, after a First Nations band took over property it claimed was theirs under an existing treaty. Over several months, there were bitter and sometimes violent clashes between the protestors and non-Aboriginal members of the community. Police approached the standoff cautiously. What might be the consequences if the standoff escalated?

Challenge and Response

1. In a T-chart, weigh the pros and cons of the Harper government in 2006–2007. Then write a newspaper editorial expressing your point of view on the effectiveness of his government.
2. When the Harper government recognized the Québécois as a nation within Canada, one observer said that Pierre Trudeau was “spinning in his grave.” Why would Trudeau have opposed this resolution? Recall what you learned in Chapter 9 as you formulate your response.
3. Do you think the Conservative government should have honoured the Kelowna Accord? Give reasons for your response.

“If we were to look at Canada from above today, we would see more than a hundred rallies and marches across the land, and thousands and thousands of people showing their support for a better quality of life for First Nations. Each event and each individual represents a point of hope—hope for a better future for First Nations, and hope for a stronger, more united Canada for all Canadians. We see the support for our cause: more than a hundred thousand strong, and a hundred points of hope.”

—Chief Phil Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations, Ottawa, 29 June 2007

ISSUES



Resolving Land Claims

The issue: What is the most effective approach to resolving land claims: negotiation or confrontation?

There are different perspectives on the best way to resolve land claims and other issues between Canada and Aboriginal peoples. Negotiation led to the first treaties between Canada and First Nations, the James Bay Agreement, and the cre-

ation of Nunavut. However, confrontations such as the Riel Rebellions and the standoffs at Oka and Ipperwash forced the government to take action. Which approach—negotiation or confrontation—is more likely to lead to a quality of life for Aboriginal peoples that is equal to that of other Canadians? The arguments below and the quotes that follow express different points of view.

Arguments In Favour of Negotiation	Arguments In Favour of Confrontation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canada has always been a peaceful country. • Negotiation has led to important achievements, such as the creation of Nunavut and the residential schools apology. • Negotiation builds bridges with other Canadians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government only listens if violent action is threatened. • Confrontations make Canadians more aware of the injustices faced by Aboriginal peoples. • Living conditions in many Aboriginal communities are themselves a form of violent neglect.

Figure 12.14 These are the main arguments in favour of negotiation or confrontation.

“[Confrontation] does shed a negative light on Aboriginal peoples and we’re just here to say that’s not the voice of all the Aboriginal population in Canada ... I believe there has to be the same set of rules for all Canadians, Aboriginal or not. When people go this far in disrupting the lives of Canadians, I think that police forces should step in.”

Source: Chief Patrick Brazeau, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, 29 June 2007.

“We feel the concerns and frustration they have. It’s a similar frustration we have every day when we drink polluted water and when we bury children who commit suicide. We live a life of disruption. We feel it’s only been through these type of actions that First Nations

issues have been made a priority for Canadians, and have elevated it in priorities for this government. We’ll continue to push this button as long as we have outstanding issues and we’ll continue to do it until there’s some results.”

Source: Shawn Brant, leader of an illegal blockade of rail lines and highways, CBC News, 29 June 2007.

“We don’t want to cause a major disruption in the lives of Canadians. We don’t want to disrupt the Canadian economy. Canadians are fair-minded people. They know the situation as we’ve described in our communities is simply unacceptable.”

Source: Chief Phil Fontaine, Assembly of First Nations, CBC News, 29 June 2007.

Responding

1. Think about the different arguments and perspectives you have read. What arguments might you add to each side? Which side do you support? Why?



Skill Path:

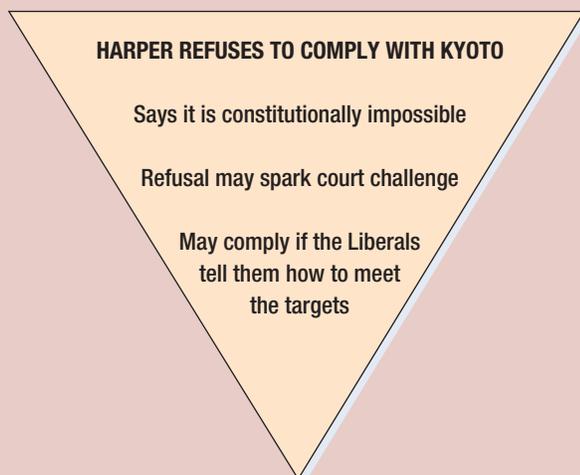
Keeping Up with the News

If you are like most Canadians, you keep up with current events by watching television or by going online. With modern telecommunications, we can see events unfold from almost anywhere in the world as they happen. Television news usually has less than one minute to present the main idea of the story—that is not enough time to examine an issue in depth. Watching television news is like reading the headlines on the front page of the newspaper. You get the main idea, but you do not know the full story.

To be informed you need to get the story *behind* the headlines. To do this, you need a complete account of the news from a reliable newspaper or newsmagazine. Reading these will keep you informed about current events. When you read a news story, follow these steps to ensure that you are staying current with the news.

STEP 1: Find Out the Facts

You need the facts behind the story presented in a balanced and unbiased way. In a newspaper story, the main issue or event comes first, followed by the most important details and then the lesser or secondary details. For example, this diagram below shows the main issue, the most important details, and then less important details, in a story about the Kyoto Protocol from June 2007.



STEP 2: Understand the Story

A well-reported news story tells the reader *who, what, where, when, why, and how*. The *why* is often the most important part of the story. It can help you to understand the story for yourself. In the story about Kyoto, the *why* is that Harper believes it is impossible to meet the Kyoto targets.

STEP 3: Analyze and Interpret the Story

Newspapers go beyond reporting the facts when they provide analysis to explain the issues and offer insights to help readers gain a better understanding. When you read the news about important issues, you need to look for different opinions and points of view that reflect more than one side of the story. Editorials and columns provide analyses and interpretations that may get you thinking about the issue. Remember, though, they only present one side of the story. As a reader, you have to decide for yourself whether you agree or disagree with the writer's point of view by analyzing the facts and deciding whether they support the writer's position. Then you can draw your own conclusions.

STEP 4: Practise Your Skill

1. Choose an important television news story. Find the same story in a national newspaper. Follow the story on television and in print for two or three days. Then create an organizer comparing the information you learned about the story from television news and the newspaper.
2. Using the Internet, track the same news story in three different newspapers from across Canada. Compare the information in a Venn diagram. What different perspectives can you identify?