



Voter's guide 2011:

How the leaders and parties stand on the monarchy/republic debate

With the 2011 Federal Election campaign coinciding with both the royal wedding and news coverage of the attempt to revise the antiquated rules of succession, many Canadian republicans are, for the first time, considering the issue of the monarchy in their voting decision.

With no party as yet with an official policy on ending the monarchy, Citizens for a Canadian Republic believes it can help voters with this important decision by sharing what we know about the federalist parties and leaders.

Our information is compiled from over ten years of research by our volunteers and organizers from various sources. We absolutely do not release details of views made to our representatives in confidence, but we do list published quotations, public comments or excerpts from non-private conversations.

In some cases, the data we're providing is already universally known. In other cases, it will not, and may raise some eyebrows. Either way, the main goal of this guide is point the massive block of republican-minded voters toward candidates and parties that we feel are the most sympathetic to promoting both internal and public debate on the monarchy.

Another purpose is to prove that republican beliefs run deep in all parties, and that one reason politicians are not speaking up is because a few party strategists feel it's too hot to handle. We know that policy is wrong. Instead, it's just the opposite. We believe the party with the most open and progressive policies on this issue will command not just respect from voters, but also electoral support.

It's important to note that that Citizens for a Canadian Republic is a non-partisan organization with supporters and organizers from the entire political spectrum. So regardless of affiliation, if we believe a party or candidate has progressive republican traits, we will advise accordingly.

So here's our guide. Good luck on May 2!

RATING FORMULA:

Our guide is composed of ratings of 1 to 5. These are the six categories:

- 1) Perceived views of the party leader
- 2) Perceived views of the caucus
- 3) Present party policy
- 4) Present openness of the party to discuss ending the monarchy
- 5) Frequency of party spokespeople or MPs expressing pro-republic opinion
- 6) Likelihood the party will form a government with a pro-republic initiative



Conservative Party of Canada

At first glance, the Conservatives may seem to be an unlikely champion of ending the monarchy. After all, their party constitution advocates: "A belief in loyalty to a sovereign" and "A belief in our constitutional monarchy." However, the same document advocates "a belief in freedom of the individual and freedom of speech," leaving one to assume that party members who don't support the monarchy would not necessarily be in breach of their own party rules.

Regardless, the evidence shows that republican sentiment is very much present within the ranks of the party. For instance, a 2010 opinion poll by Angus Reid indicated that more Conservative voters (52%) than Liberal voters (45%) supported reopening the constitution to discuss replacing the monarchy with an elected head of state. That says a lot.

The leader: Stephen Harper is an ardent advocate of senate reform, once referring to the appointed upper house as "a relic of the 19th century." It's not a huge stretch to assume that he may even have the same views about an appointed governor general as a representative of another relic of the 19th century: the monarchy.

The party: In 2002, on a Montreal radio talk show, Jim Abbott, Canadian Alliance MP for Kootenay—Columbia (and now a Conservative MP), commented on the views of his party toward republicanism:

"On the question of the monarchy, there are people within the party who are in favour of continuing with the monarchy, there are people who would perhaps take Mr. Manley's position and I think that there will be a time and a place for that debate."

Parliamentary Hansard records from February 29th, 2000 also reveal some very interesting comments by Preston Manning, the former leader of the Reform Party, whose members now make up a huge chunk of the Conservative Party. They were made in reference to government spending, but nonetheless, they don't give the impression he's a monarchist:

"It is the arrogance of inherited position and the power that goes along with it. It is like the arrogance that afflicted the old monarchies and aristocracies of Europe who believed in the divine right of kings, who believed they had a divine right to govern regardless of ability, accomplishment or the impact of what they were doing on their own people."

One of Citizens for a Canadian Republic's Vancouver organizers, J.J. McCullough (a contributor to this report) also worked on BC Conservative MP James Moore's election campaign, and has some fascinating insight on his personal views of the monarchy.

"During the 2004 and 2006 federal elections I volunteered for the re-election campaigns of James Moore, and always found him to be a genuine and honest supporter of the republican cause, with views that were moderated only by traditional political pragmatism. Indeed, part of the reason why I was motivated to help re-elect Moore in the first place was because of his support of abolishing the monarchy in Canada."

Apparently, James Moore's outspoken republicanism "was known to his caucus colleagues and treated with, at best, amused indifference." Moore even admitted "that he would personally be completely comfortable with ending Canada's ties to the monarchy," although also acknowledging the complexities and questioning the priority.

Moore has since gone on to become Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, ironically, the ministry charged with managing Canada's relationship with the monarchy.

He seems to be doing his job well and monarchists have never complained about him not fulfilling his duties. In fact, similar to the views of Australia's governor general, who said in 2009 that she believed Australia would one day be a republic, this proves that one can believe in a future without a constitutional link to the monarchy, while also acknowledging that our *historical and cultural* link to it need not be compromised.

Republican-inspired legislation is also not new to Conservatives. Under the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney, Citizenship and Immigration Minister David Crombie released a position paper titled

“Citizenship 87: Proud to be Canadian” as a national unity initiative. One major issue was the nature of the citizenship oath; with the government indicating it was prepared to consider whether the citizenship oath should be amended to either give allegiance to Canada precedence over allegiance to the Queen, or to completely eliminate any reference to the monarchy. The reforms were never legislated, possibly due to preoccupation with the Charlottetown Accord.

Regardless, republican beliefs appear to be strongest in the old Reform wing rather than members who have roots in the old Progressive Conservative Party. Which could explain the reluctance of the Prime Minister to make the issue a higher priority: He may be more interested in keeping the two wings of his party united.

Scores:

- 1) Perceived views of the party leader - 2
- 2) Perceived views of the caucus - 4
- 3) Present party policy - 0
- 4) Present openness of the party to discuss ending the monarchy - 0
- 5) Frequency of party spokespeople or MPs expressing pro-republic opinion - 0
- 6) Likelihood the party will form a government with a pro-republic initiative - 1

Rating: 7 out of 30

Recommendation: If you're in favour of head of state reform, the Conservatives don't appear, at the moment, to be the best party to push the issue forward. However, it's clear that many candidates are republican, so who knows, maybe they can change the party's direction. Until then, voters are advised to ask their candidates their views and vote accordingly.



As far as percentage of republic supporters among caucus, the Green Party of Canada probably rates number one. By far, we also get the most supportive correspondence from Green Party members, which indicates that in time, there's no doubt Canada's Greens will follow the Australian Green Party who advocate that "Australia should become a republic with an Australian head of state."

However, presently, the party has no seats in parliament, with none easily in sight. Therefore, it gets low marks for being able to influence the debate in parliament.

The leader: To our knowledge, despite many opportunities, Elizabeth May has never made any statement in support of head of state reform. Unless she's been extremely adept at concealing her views, one would conclude that she's not a republican.

The party: In 2008, at its bi-annual convention in Pictou, Nova Scotia, the Green Party of Canada passed a resolution calling for the removal of all reference to the Queen and monarchy in the Canadian Citizenship Oath. Quite surprisingly, there was also a resolution calling for the replacement of the Queen with an elected official. It did not pass. Full marks for considering it, though.

Confusion afterwards about whether the resolution on the Queen as head of state had also passed provoked Elizabeth May to angrily respond on the party's blog that it had not.

Scores:

- 1) Perceived views of the party leader - 0
- 2) Perceived views of the caucus - 5
- 3) Present party policy - 4
- 4) Present openness of the party to discuss ending the monarchy - 5
- 5) Frequency of party spokespeople or MPs expressing pro-republic opinion - 0
- 6) Likelihood the party will form a government with a pro-republic initiative - 0

Rating: 14 out of 30

Recommendation: Admirably, the Green Party gets the bulk of its support from people who vote for the party's ideals and care little about whether they'll form a government. For that reason, if you're already a Green Party supporter, you'll be even more comforted to know that the vast majority of the party is on your side regarding the monarchy/republic issue.

It's also important to note that despite not having seats, the party does have some political clout. So if the debate ever does develop, as we fully expect it will, another supportive party can only help. The bottom line: don't let the party's lack of seats dissuade you from voting with your heart.



Historically, the Liberal Party has been the driving force behind most of Canada's moves toward independence. The list is long: The Citizenship Act, the flag, patriating the constitution, as well as Canadianizing the identity of most government institutions - just to name a few. However, one issue has not yet inspired the personal attention of a prime minister or leader: the monarchy.

Republicans often hear the same story from Liberals as we do from the other parties: that it's not a priority, and that there are other things to worry about. Well, maybe the issue isn't on the same level as the economy or health care, but if Pearson had the same attitude, Canada would still be flying a British naval ensign as our national flag. There were many important issues to deal with in 1964, but Pearson proved that a government knows how to chew gum and walk at the same time - and most Canadians are glad he did.

Nevertheless, there are many reasons to believe the Liberals could some day champion the cause:

The leader: In 1992, when Micheal Ignatieff was a journalist, he wrote a superbly written (as one would expect) and scathing attack on monarchical principles in the [Montreal Gazette](#). Regarding the separation of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, he wrote,

"Listening to the separation announcement, I found myself wondering exactly why this shambles was so magically preferable to an elected presidency."

"... the British now have to decide whether to admit how republican their history actually is or whether to continue with the fantasy that they are ruled by kings and queens."

The party: Some of Ignatieff's closest advisors are republican: one being his Chief of Staff, Peter Donolo. Commendably, Donolo has never shied away from his republican views. His best quotation, from Macleans Magazine in 2002, is classic in our movement: He referred to Canada as "behaving like a colonial outpost" by clinging to the British monarchy.

Many current MPs have also spoken out publically for a debate on cutting ties to the monarchy: Herb Dhaliwal and Ken Dryden are the most prominent. Under Chretien's government, John Manley, of course, as well as Brian Tobin, Warren Allmand and Alex Shepherd, being the more vocal.

In 2007, there were reports in the media that suggested senior officials in Prime Minister Chretien's Office were promoting the idea of ending the Queen's role as head of state to mark the millennium. The fact that a process as complex as ending the monarchy was planned to be implemented in such a short amount of time indicates the idea was not proposed seriously. Many gathered it was "floated" in order to test the public's reaction. At the time, knowledge of the implication was still highly dependent on the lobbying of the monarchist league, so there's no surprise the reaction was less favourable than hoped. Peter Donolo, then the prime minister's communications director, confirmed discussions about a non-monarchical system in Canada had occurred, but said there were no plans to move ahead with it.

The Liberal Party's many initiatives to have the Queen removed from the Citizenship Oath have been valiant but, as yet, unsuccessful.

In 2005, the Liberal government removed the obligation for Federal Government employees to swear an oath to the Queen.

Scores:

- 1) Perceived views of the party leader - 5
- 2) Perceived views of the caucus - 4
- 3) Present party policy - 0
- 4) Present openness of the party to discuss ending the monarchy - 2
- 5) Frequency of party spokespeople or MPs expressing pro-republic opinion - 5
- 6) Likelihood the party will form a government with a pro-republic initiative - 4

Rating: 20 out of 30

Recommendation: There's no doubt the Liberals are a shadow of what they once were. However, in a coalition or power-sharing position, they could help propel the republic debate forward. If you've always considered yourself a centrist, the Liberal Party is still a comfortable one for any republican. Voters are advised to discuss the issue with their candidate. There are still a handful of vocal monarchists running for election in the Liberal Party.



New Democratic Party of Canada

Despite receiving our highest rating, the NDP also holds the distinctive position in this guide of being the most disappointing in regards to promoting the monarchy debate in Canada. The reason is simple: being social democrats, the bar is set much higher for that party than all the rest. Throughout the Commonwealth (the UK excepted) it's the NDP's ideological brethren, the Labour parties of Australia, Barbados, Jamaica and New Zealand that have made becoming a republic - with one of their own citizens as head of state - a prominent part of their platforms. They haven't suffered for it either. In those countries, social democratic governments are the norm. Why the NDP doesn't see the electoral benefit of promoting the same goal here in Canada escapes most republicans. Public opinion supports ending the monarchy by a convincing margin, especially in vote rich Quebec where the NDP is trying to improve their base of support. Perhaps they're waiting for the right time? One can only guess.

Whatever the course NDP strategists plan for the impending debate, there's no denying that the depth of republican sentiment within the party easily matches that of social democrats elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

For those of us who look for the signs, the evidence is clear:

The leader: I had a chance meeting with Jack Layton in a Toronto bicycle shop in the fall of 2002, a few months before he became NDP leader in January 2003. After introducing myself as being with Canada's budding republican movement, I told him our new organization wants to see the head of state Canadianized and asked if this is something he supported. His answer was quick:

"It depends on what you mean by Canadianized. If you're talking about the governor general becoming the official head of state, I'm all for it."

Granted, that was before he was chosen leader of the NDP. A Vancouver interview in 2006, after being leader for three years, reveals those views were indeed still intact. This guide's contributor, J.J. McCullough, at the time writing for the independent Other Press, asked him what he thought of the monarchy. While acknowledging that constitutional monarchy has worked well in the past, Layton admitted,

"I do believe that Canadians struggle, as the years go by, with the issue of relevancy. On the other hand I think we've had Governors General, and certainly our current Governor General would be a good example, of someone representing the Crown - I don't mean an individual but the phenomenon, the concept of our collective statehood - in kind of an interesting way."

The fact that Layton very perceptively sees the Crown as our collective statehood and not an exclusive description of the monarchy is extremely promising. This is exactly the direction we as Canadian republicans want the discussion to go.

Citizens for a Canadian Republic has attempted to poll federal candidates on the monarchy in the last two general elections. In both cases, we initially got a lot of very positive feedback, until all parties quickly instructed candidates not to answer our questions because only the party headquarters could provide those views. The response from Jack Layton was promising, however:

"Canada's New Democratic caucus has not taken an official position on this issue, to this point. This decision could be considered by a future caucus of the New Democratic Party of Canada."

The party: The NDP has also gone further than any other party in discussing the monarchy's future in policy meetings. In 1999, an official NDP document titled "[Social Democratic Forum on Canada's Future](#)" considered the "Canadianization of the head of state" by suggesting the country follow Australia's progress, which was contemplating becoming a republic.

At the 22nd biennial New Democratic convention, a resolution was put forth to have the party "conduct an active campaign so that Canada becomes a republic" and "conduct an active campaign to redefine the role of the Executive within the Canadian Constitution." Neither resolution passed.

A few MPs have been vocal in opposing the monarchy: Pat Martin, in particular, is quite passionate about it. Joe Comartin as well.

It's also worth mentioning - if only to understand the party's wider republican ideology - that the monarchy has been an issue in the provincial wings as well. The Nova Scotia NDP successfully fought against an initiative by the ruling Conservatives to restore the singing of God Save the Queen at the opening of the legislature. According to then Opposition Leader Darrell Dexter:

"The Royal Anthem is not appropriate in a legislative chamber whose constitutional purpose is to assert people's democratic right to govern themselves rather than be ruled by a monarch"

A former naval officer, Dexter is now the Premier of Nova Scotia.

Scores:

- 1) Perceived views of the party leader - 5
- 2) Perceived views of the caucus - 5
- 3) Present party policy - 4
- 4) Present openness of the party to discuss ending the monarchy - 5
- 5) Frequency of party spokespeople or MPs expressing pro-republic opinion - 4
- 6) Likelihood the party will form a government with a pro-republic initiative - 3

Rating: 26 out of 30

Recommendation: If you have social democratic to centrist values and you're republican to the core, then the NDP is your party.

The winner? The NDP.

This is not an endorsement of any party. It's merely a guide for people to judge a party on this single issue. If anything, it's a wake-up call to the others to get moving on generating monarchy/republic policy before the NDP owns it. We hope someday soon all parties in Canada can score in the same vicinity as the NDP has in this guide. Until then, it holds the most potential for making history and being the first one to announce a pro-republic policy. And with the rising tide of new support at the end of this 2011 campaign, that could be sooner rather than later.

Regardless of whether or not that support results in a dramatic change in the party's influence, the NDP will most definitely be a major contributor to the inevitable parliamentary debate.

by Tom Freda, with research from J.J. McCullough