

DATA DIVE WITH NIK NANOS

HOW DOUG FORD REMADE ONTARIO

The June 2 election brought Ontario’s Progressive Conservatives a majority government and led the provincial NDP and Liberal leaders to quit. Parties in other provinces and on Parliament Hill should take notes on how they did that

OPINION

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It was total victory for Doug Ford’s Progressive Conservatives in the Ontario election earlier this month. Not only did they capture the greatest number of seats and win the popular vote, they also vanquished the two main opposition leaders, both of whom resigned within hours of the polling stations closing and the results streaming in.

With much of the public bruised by the pandemic, reeling from inflation and worried about a recession, you’d think the Ford government would have been on the ropes. In a Nanos survey for CTV News and CP24, 45 per cent of Ontarians (and 53 per cent among younger voters) were feeling negative about the future, while 37 per cent were positive.

Pessimism is usually bad news for an incumbent government seeking another mandate. So how did the PCs win a second majority?

First, the Ford franchise was recalibrated. In 2018, Mr. Ford was an outsider and agent of change leading an electorate wanting to punish a tired provincial Liberal government. Most winning parties replicate their strategy, thinking that what won the last time would work again.

Not so for Team Ford in 2022. Although still true to his very strong retail political roots, which he honed with his brother Rob, the new Mr. Ford emphasized practical leadership.

He was a conservative, yet took a very hard line on vaccinations, even booting out caucus members who did not disclose their vaccination status or who refused to get the jab.

Mr. Ford accepted the offer to join the federal Liberals’ national \$10-a-day daycare program and worked closely with their cabinet during the pandemic – even praising the working relationship. He called the trucker-convoy protesters “a bunch of yahoos.” He also won endorsements from some unions.

If, in 2018, anyone said that Mr. Ford would be associated with any of these headlines, you would have rightly been asked

what you were smoking. But he has successfully rebuilt the PC Party as a big-tent movement centred on his personal leadership.

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During the campaign, the Premier moved forward like a steamroller, highly disciplined in his messaging. Neither the New Democrats nor the Liberals landed a punch on the front runner.

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The weekly tracking by Nanos for CTV News and CP24 showed the PCs with a lead on Day 1 that endured for the whole election.

Mr. Ford was no doubt helped by the dismal 43-per-cent turnout, which popular wisdom suggests favours incumbent governments, as well as reflecting the boring nature of the election.

The good news for the New Democrats is they remain the Official Opposition, though longtime leader Andrea Horwath resigned.

There was no good news for

the Liberals. Their leader, Steven Del Duca, never caught on, and their showing was so poor that they still do not have official party status. Another four years without it will be a crippling blow to a once-mighty political force.

With the opposition on its heels, this is the opportunity of a lifetime for Mr. Ford, who, having remade the PCs, now can remake the provincial – and one can argue the national – political landscape.

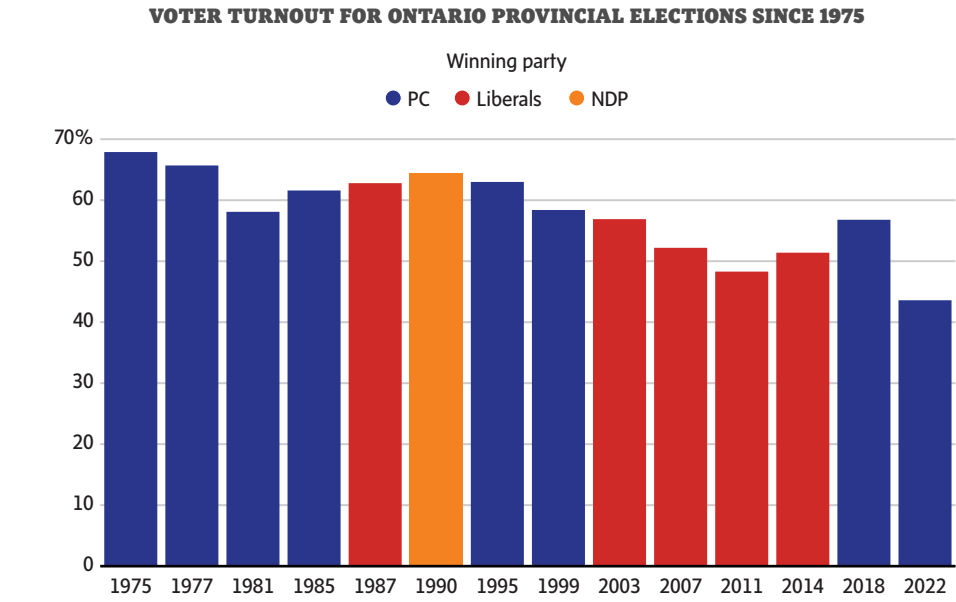
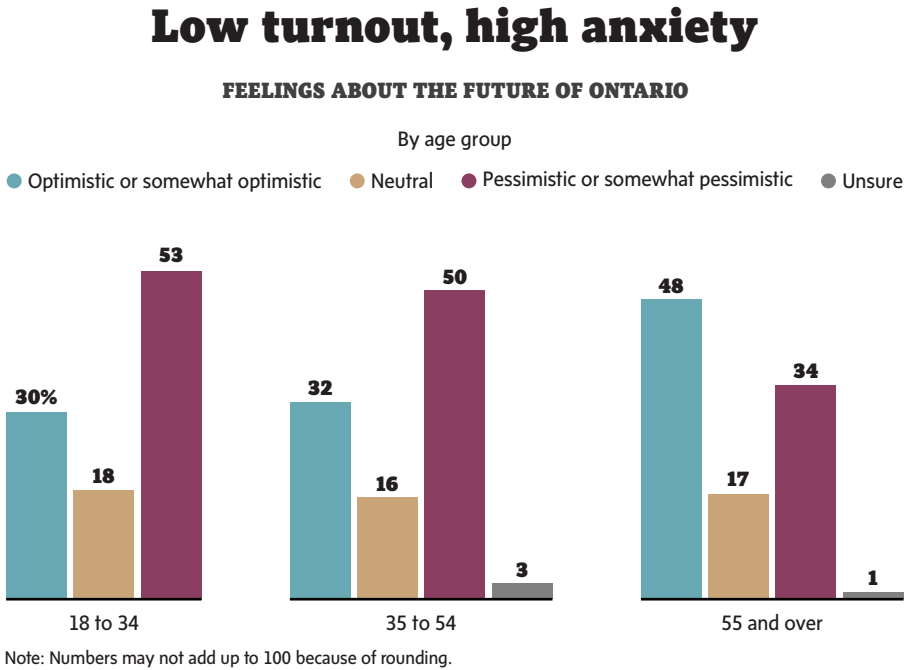
Both federal Liberals and federal Conservatives should take note of his path to victory. Key suburban ridings that voted for the Trudeau Liberals in 2019 swung over to the Ford PCs this spring. The Liberal brand in Ontario is currently weak and it’s clear that, lacking motivation, progressive voters stayed home in the provincial election.

Every government has a best-before date. The federal Liberals have been in power for seven years, winning a majority in 2015 followed by two successive minority governments. Of course, winning three elections is no easy feat. But winning the greatest number of seats in 2019 and 2021 while losing the popular vote to the Conservatives should be a sobering experience for the governing party heading into 2024.

The Ford victory should be a wake-up call for the federal Conservatives, too. If the West is the Conservative base, Ontario is the party’s political prize. It is almost mathematically impossible for the Conservatives to win a government without doing well in Ontario. If they want to oust the Liberals in Ottawa, the Ford pragmatism is the clearest path forward.

Embracing the vaccine-hesitant and running like a populist may make for good political entertainment, and even win a nomination, but it is a distant cry from the winning formula crafted by Mr. Ford. (That said, if Canadians remain tired of the federal Liberals, the winning formula may very well be to not make a mistake and to ride a wave of change. In that scenario, the Liberals are in trouble, whether the Conservative leader is a populist or not.)

However the next federal election plays out, it’s clear that Ontario’s Fordquake has shaken the province’s politics to its foundation and will reverberate across the country.



MURAT YÜKSELİR / THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: NANOS RESEARCH; ELECTIONS ONTARIO

The CAF’s sexual misconduct crisis is not reason enough to shutter Canada’s military colleges

LAWRENCE STEVENSON

OPINION

Managing partner at Clearspring Capital, the founder and former CEO of Chapters, and a member of the RMC Class of 1978

After numerous examples of serious inappropriate behaviour by many senior leaders in the Canadian Armed Forces, former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour delivered her Independent External Comprehensive Review (IECR) last month, offering up a number of recommendations to address the issues of sexual misconduct. Many of those recommendations are worthy. But as a proud graduate of the Royal Military College (RMC), I strongly disagree with one of Ms. Arbour’s suggestions: that we close our military colleges.

“The military colleges appear as institutions from a different era, with an outdated and problematic leadership model,” she wrote. “There are legitimate reasons to question the wisdom of maintaining the existence of these military colleges.”

But there is a legitimate reason that all serious armed forces in the world have military academies: They not only cover academics but also train young officer candidates in the military skills that will prepare them to serve as officers. Canada’s military colleges have a long legacy in this country, having been found-

ed in 1876; the RMC flag was the basis for the modern Canadian flag. And over the course of nearly 150 years, Canada’s royal military colleges have graduated outstanding alumni, including Marc Garneau, Chris Hadfield and Captain Nichola Goddard, a graduate of the RMC class of 2002, who valiantly gave her life in Afghanistan in 2006 so that we could be free from terrorism here at home. I suspect that the families of other RMC soldiers, sailors and airmen who have made the ultimate sacrifice in all our wars, including most recently in Afghanistan, would also strongly object to Ms. Arbour’s recommendation.

In the fall of 1977, I was interviewed by a journalist on *The Fifth Estate* on the subject of admitting women to the colleges. She started off her broadcast by standing on RMC Kingston’s parade square, saying: “Here I stand at the last bastion of male chauvinism in Canada.” During my on-screen interview as the senior officer cadet in fourth year, I repeated the party line: that the military colleges were in place to train combat officers, and since women could not be combat officers it followed logically that women should not be admitted to the military colleges.

My own personal view at the time, though, was that the right compromise was to turn one of the military colleges (of which there were three, at the time) into an all-female military college. Given that U.S. military college West Point had already made the decision to admit women, it was

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clear to all that Canada would follow suit (for political reasons primarily, since the military was opposed). This indeed happened with the first class of female cadets, who entered the colleges in 1980. Since then, women have excelled at RMC militarily, academically and athletically, and many have been selected to the position of cadet wing commander, the most senior appointment in fourth year, conclusively proving that the decision to admit them to RMC was the right one.

Despite women’s decisive suc-

cess in these spaces, Ms. Arbour now suggests they should be shuttered because of the “ongoing incidence of sexual misconduct.” Indeed, sexual misconduct is a very real problem that needs to be addressed at all universities. But while a Statistics Canada survey of 500 military college cadets found that 68 per cent had witnessed or experienced unwanted sexual behaviour, a 2018 Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities survey of 7,000 Queen’s University students (just across town from RMC Kingston) claimed that a full 71 per cent of these students experienced sexual harassment. Yet no one is suggesting today that we should shut down Queen’s or my alma mater Harvard University, which was among the prominent U.S. universities with alarmingly high rates of sexual misconduct, according to the terrific 2015 documentary *The Hunting Ground*.

Too often, entire institutions are discarded when the actions of individuals are the point of concern. In 1993, for instance, three Canadian soldiers in the storied Canadian Airborne Regiment were convicted of torturing and killing a Somali teenager. Two years later, the federal government decided for political reasons to disband this proud regiment – in which I served as a captain, back in 1980. Disbandment was the wrong decision. Many soldiers wearing the Airborne’s maroon beret had given their lives in the Second World War. The guilty certainly deserved to be punished, and they were;

the leaders should have stepped down, and they did. But the institution itself should have lived on. The same holds true for Canada’s military colleges: Cadets guilty of sexual misconduct should face punishment, but eradicating RMC itself makes no sense.

I attended a West Point graduation in 2009 for the daughter of a friend, and the commencement speaker was then U.S. defence secretary Robert Gates. His address was not the kind of message that would be delivered at civilian universities: He emphasized that many of the cadets graduating and listening to him on this sunny day north of New York would be killed in the next few years in Iraq and Afghanistan. It highlighted how West Point and other U.S. military academies shoulder more than their fair share in defending their countries. Indeed, 40 per cent of the West Point Class of 1943 were killed in the Second World War.

So yes, Ms. Arbour: A lot is being shoehorned into a four-year college program. That is because RMC is not just a four-year college program; like West Point, it is designed to form the leaders of our very capable military forces. As Thucydides said, “The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools.” RMC has trained warrior-scholars for close to 150 years, and in the tumultuous circumstances we face today, this is not the time to destroy the institutions that help keep us safe and free.