



## The Ignatieff effect

This month's cover thematic on Michael Ignatieff coincides with the convention in Vancouver, which has been transformed into his coronation as Liberal leader.

"There is no crown you know," he said when we met for a Q&A last month. Sitting in a sunny alcove at Stornoway, Ignatieff was in a relaxed but reflective mood. In a wide-ranging interview, he discussed Canada's current economic context, the difficulties of our mission in Afghanistan, relations with the United States, and the role of Quebec in the federation, among other issues. He also discussed the challenges of uniting the Liberal Party and leading it back to government.

Our interview with Ignatieff sets the scene for a package of five strong articles on the broader political context in which he assumes the leadership of a party that has built dynasties from the time of Wilfrid Laurier, whose portrait hangs behind Ignatieff's desk in his study.

Contributing Writer David Herle, no stranger to Liberal inner circles (he was Paul Martin's pollster and strategist), writes that the tectonic plates of Canadian politics are shifting in favour of the Liberals, after a period in which they were out of favour and underperformed during the disastrous leadership of Stéphane Dion.

Robin Sears concurs that Ignatieff has done more to arrest the decline in Liberal fortunes "in less than six months than his two predecessors did in the previous six years," but observes that many obstacles remain in his path.

From across the aisle, Geoff Norquay writes that with Ignatieff's formal accession to the Liberal leadership at the convention, the stage is set for a very competitive election between the Liberal opposition leader and Conservative leader Stephen Harper. Norquay sees it as a battle of the titans in the making, and sends a progress report from his vantage point in Ottawa.

And there's Quebec — there is always Quebec. How is Ignatieff doing there, and what are the prospects for a Liberal restoration? Antonia Maioni, from her seat at McGill University, asks whether he can win back Quebec for the Liberals, but observes that he remains a mostly unknown quantity to Quebecers. From the Université de Sherbrooke, Jean-Herman Guay writes that the contrast in Ignatieff's and

## L'effet Ignatieff

Ce numéro sur Michael Ignatieff coïncide avec le congrès de Vancouver, qui a donné lieu à son couronnement à la tête du Parti libéral du Canada.

« Mais il n'y a pas de couronne », a-t-il rétorqué lors de notre long entretien du mois dernier. Installé dans une alcôve ensoleillée de Stornoway, l'homme était d'humeur à la fois pensive et détendue. C'est sur ce ton qu'il s'est notamment exprimé sur la conjoncture économique du pays, les écueils de notre mission en Afghanistan, nos relations avec les États-Unis et le rôle du Québec au sein de la fédération. Sans oublier les défis liés à l'unité du Parti libéral et à son éventuel retour au pouvoir.

Autour de cet entretien, cinq articles éclairants examinent la conjoncture politique dans laquelle le chef libéral a pris la direction d'un parti qui a donné naissance à plusieurs dynasties depuis Wilfrid Laurier, dont le portrait trône d'ailleurs derrière son bureau.

Selon David Herle, qui a connu le parti de l'intérieur en tant que sondeur et stratège de Paul Martin, les « plaques tectoniques » de la vie politique canadienne se déplacent à nouveau au profit des libéraux, après une difficile période où ils avaient perdu la faveur populaire et multiplié les contre-performances sous le désastreux leadership de Stéphane Dion.

Robin Sears estime qu'« en moins de six mois », Michael Ignatieff a fait davantage pour freiner le déclin du parti libéral « que ne l'ont fait en six ans ses deux prédécesseurs », tout en observant que son parcours reste semé d'embûches.

Avec l'accession officielle d'Ignatieff à la direction du parti, note pour sa part le conservateur Geoff Norquay, la table est mise pour une élection chaudement disputée. C'est une lutte de titans qui se prépare, annonce-t-il dans son analyse qui nous parvient d'Ottawa.

Et qu'en est-il du Québec ? Inévitable question, qui amène à s'interroger sur la perception suscitée par le chef libéral et ses chances d'y rétablir l'influence de son parti. Antonia Maioni se demande s'il pourra reconquérir une province où il reste pour l'instant relativement méconnu. De l'Université de Sherbrooke, Jean-Herman Guay observe que le contraste entre les personnalités de Michael Ignatieff et de Stéphane Dion favorise les libéraux, même si les résultats de la dernière élec-

Dion's personalities works in the Liberals' favour but also notes that some voting numbers were beginning to break their way in the election — while the Liberals lost nearly 1 million votes in English-speaking Canada, they actually picked up about 100,000 in Quebec, even under Dion. "Will Michael Ignatieff try to reincarnate Wilfrid Laurier, and play on the same ice as Pierre Trudeau?" he asks.

Only the playoffs will tell whether Iggy can play the game at this level.

Elsewhere this month, Contributing Writer Jeremy Kinsman reviews Barack Obama's first tour on the world stage, and finds that while he didn't get much of what he was looking for from America's European allies, he did not put a foot wrong in his eight-day swing, an excellent European adventure. Stephen Harper was on the same stage at the G20 and NATO summits, and Kinsman gives him a mixed review on making the Canadian case. Kinsman says Harper was rather smug on the relative performance of Canada's financial institutions and fiscal frameworks, but principled and impassioned at NATO in scolding the Afghan government for its law limiting the rights of women.

In *The Federation*, Carin Holroyd of Waterloo University writes that the perennial challenge of balancing federal and provincial powers faces new stresses in an age of economic globalization. As the provinces increasingly seek a role as well as representation abroad, Ottawa is challenged in effectively representing the interests of all. But, she writes, there are also opportunities.

In the wake of the recent disruptive strikes at York University and in the Ottawa transit system, Jack Strawbridge points out that in public service strikes, it's the clients who are hurt, not the employers. At York, 50,000 students were shut out of class, with their school year in jeopardy, and yet they "were not a party to the dispute." Strawbridge, a consultant in academic labour relations, suggests it's time to re-examine the model of collective bargaining in the public sector.

Neil Seeman and Carlos Rizo look at innovation in public health care and ask how governments can do a better job of communicating to Canadians why it matters. In a certain sense, your health depends on it.

In this month's *Verbatim*, Privy Council Clerk Kevin Lynch reflects on the challenges of steering the government, and the country, through the current economic storm. Paradoxically, the 24/7 news environment, and the uncertainty of economic forecasting, make this moment "the civilian equivalent of the fog of war" — it is hard to know where we are and when we will come out of it.

Finally, in an excerpt from his book, *From Pride to Influence*, Michael Hart makes the case that Canadian foreign policy must serve our interests, beginning with our common interests with the United States. John Noble, a veteran Foreign Affairs hand, reviews Hart's book and gives it a strong thumbs-up.

tion y annonçaient déjà une remontée : les libéraux avaient certes perdu près d'un million d'électeurs au Canada anglais mais en avaient regagné environ 100 000 au Québec, même sous Stéphane Dion. « Michael Ignatieff tentera-t-il de se réincarner en Wilfrid Laurier et de jouer sur la même patinoire que Pierre Trudeau ? » Les éliminatoires diront si son niveau de jeu est à la hauteur.

Par ailleurs ce mois-ci, notre collaborateur Jeremy Kinsman dresse le bilan de la première tournée mondiale de Barack Obama, qui n'a guère obtenu ce qu'il souhaitait des alliés européens des États-Unis tout en réussissant un sans-faute lors des huit jours d'un fascinant périple. Le bilan est plus mitigé pour Stephen Harper, qui a partagé la scène avec le président américain. Il a frisé l'arrogance en comparant le cadre financier et la performance des institutions financières du Canada à ceux des autres pays du G20, estime notre collaborateur, mais s'est rattrapé au sommet de l'OTAN en dénonçant avec justesse et fermeté la loi du gouvernement afghan restreignant les droits des femmes.

Sous notre rubrique *La fédération*, Carin Holroyd examine les nouveaux défis soulevés par la quête d'équilibre entre les responsabilités et pouvoirs fédéraux-provinciaux à l'heure de la mondialisation économique. De plus en plus, les provinces cherchent en effet à s'imposer sur les marchés internationaux, ce qui rend difficile pour Ottawa de représenter efficacement l'ensemble de leurs intérêts. Une tendance qui présente toutefois d'intéressantes possibilités.

À propos des grèves qui ont perturbé l'Université York et les transports en commun d'Ottawa, Jack Strawbridge souligne que les conflits de travail dans la fonction publique nuisent beaucoup plus aux usagers qu'aux employeurs. C'est ainsi que « sans être partie prenante au conflit », 50 000 étudiants ont été privés de cours et risquent de perdre leur année scolaire. Il est grand temps de réexaminer le mode de négociation collective dans la fonction publique, écrit le consultant en relations de travail en milieu universitaire.

Sur la question des soins de santé, Neil Seeman et Carlos Rizo font valoir l'importance de l'innovation et jugent que les gouvernements doivent mieux expliquer aux Canadiens pourquoi elle est indispensable, puisqu'il en va de notre santé à tous.

Notre rubrique *Verbatim* donne ce mois-ci la parole à Kevin Lynch, greffier du Conseil privé, qui recense les défis que doit relever le gouvernement pour assurer au pays de surmonter la crise actuelle. Paradoxalement, note-t-il, l'information permanente et l'incertitude des prévisions économiques font de cette période « l'équivalent civil du "brouillard de guerre" ». D'où la difficulté de nous repérer et de trouver la meilleure issue.

Nous publions enfin un extrait du dernier ouvrage de Michael Hart, *From Pride to Influence*, dans lequel l'auteur soutient avec conviction que notre politique étrangère doit d'abord servir nos propres intérêts, à commencer par ceux que nous partageons avec les États-Unis.

# possibilities

## Q&A: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO INTEROPERABILITY

The complex task of getting people, systems and IT to work together seamlessly in mixed IT environments is an important priority, and challenge, for Canadian governments and for governments around the world.

*Possibilities*, a Microsoft Canada publication dedicated to celebrating innovative achievements and fostering thought-leading discussions with the public sector, sat down with Theresa Pardo and Brian Burke from the Center for Technology in Government at the University at Albany, SUNY, to discuss their most recent research on interoperability in government.

### Q: What is interoperability?

**Theresa Pardo:** Interoperability is often associated with technology, but it's also about management and public policy. We know, for example, that the technology that enables the sharing of individual health records already exists. But from a regulatory or legislative perspective, the freedom to actually share that data is still limited. So if a government wants to pursue electronic health records or any other initiative that requires interoperability, it must first have the appropriate policies in place.

### Q: In your most recent research, you refer to interoperability as an "intense struggle." Why is it so difficult for governments to achieve?

**TP:** There are several reasons. The first is resource allocation. Agencies or systems can't connect to each other if there is no money in their budgets to support a broader interoperability agenda, and government budgets don't necessarily account for the co-mingling of spending and priorities. Generally speaking, there are no resource allocation models in place that actually support the kind of tasks that have to be carried out to create truly interoperable policies, practices and technologies.

**Brian Burke:** Another hurdle is getting leaders, whether in government or the private sector, to understand that the work that they do plays a critical role in making interoperability possible. Too often they'll say "the IT shop can't seem to get this major business process implemented across six agencies" when it's not an IT problem to begin with. It comes down to the people: the front-line managers, policy makers or agency executives. Finally, interoperability can be difficult to measure in traditional terms. Interoperability "wins" are not the kind of initiatives that traditionally get talked about in a press release. I think this is another challenge.

### Q: What's at stake? Why is it important to get interoperability right?

**TP:** Interoperability leads to a government worth having, a government that operates at a new level and demonstrates very visible benefits to its citizens. This is an important factor, as people increasingly expect the government to offer immediate and seamless services, similar to Amazon.com or eBay. We're already seeing results: look at New York, for example, where a business can apply in one place for all the permits they require from various labour and liquor boards. That's an example of something that has a tangible benefit for citizens.



Interoperability also touches things the citizen doesn't see directly, such as improving emergency response or public safety capabilities, or giving governments the ability to track vendors in a more informed way and ensure that the contracting practice is transparent. These are the kinds of initiatives that increase the value of government in the lives of citizens.

### Q: Can you point to some success stories?

**TP:** The criminal justice system is a great example, where the ability to share information across multiple criminal justice organizations and, therefore, improve public safety is quite evident. You see it as well in public health, in responding to disease outbreaks like the West Nile virus.

### Q: Are there any in Canada?

**BB:** Service New Brunswick, a one-stop portal for citizens who need information or a service from the provincial government, is a successful example of providing citizens with services they need, and it has everything to do with interoperability. New Brunswick has done customer satisfaction surveys and found that citizens are very satisfied with their government. That is a direct result of interoperability.

### Q: How do government executives go about solving the interoperability challenge to create more of these successes?

**BB:** As we said earlier, you can get there when an executive recognizes the need to create a truly interoperable government. During the initiative to combat the West Nile virus, for example, the commissioner of Public Health who led the project basically said to all of the state agencies, "You will work together to make this happen." It was amazing what happened as a consequence of that statement, and it's a great example of the kind of executive leadership that made it possible for agencies and local governments to come together in a new way and create a capability that didn't exist before.

For additional information about interoperability, visit [www.microsoft.ca/interop](http://www.microsoft.ca/interop)

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